225.52-Bo

.64

A. Bernard.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Crown 8vo, 3s. 6d.

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin:

Being the Substance of all the Sermons for Mary's Feasts throughout the Year

BY

JACQUES BÉNIGNE BOSSUET
Bishop of Meaux

Condensed, Arranged and Translated by
F. M. CAPES

With an Introduction by the Rev. W. T. GORDON, Priest of the London Oratory

---

LONGMANS, GREEN & CO.
LONDON, NEW YORK, AND BOMBAY

BX
1756
.B7
S3813
1900

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

BY

JACQUES BÉNIGNE BOSSUET

BISHOP OF MEAUX

Translated, with a short Introduction,

BY

F. M. CAPES

FROM THE

'MEDITATIONS ON THE GOSPELS'

ST. FRANCIS SEMINARY
SALZMANN
LIBRARY
MILWAUKEE 7, WIS.
WITHDRAWN

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
NEW YORK AND BOMBAY
1900

[*All rights reserved*]

Introduction[1]

BOSSUET'S editors and biographers dwell with much emphasis not only on the great extent and deep learning of his divers writings on Holy Scripture, but on the very remarkable nature of his love for Biblical knowledge. This originated in an extraordinarily strong impression made upon him by the Bible, on his first direct acquaintance with it, when a mere boy in the class of Rhetoric under the Jesuits at Dijon. Cardinal Bausset gives so vivid an account of this incident in the great preacher's life that his words are worth quoting :—

'The *Elements of Euclid*' he says 'had revealed to Pascal the secret of his genius. Descartes's *Man* seized upon the imagination of Malebranche, and transported him to the

[1] *N.B.*—The substance of this short introduction is taken from some prefatory 'Observations' by the editor (name not given) of an edition of Bossuet's works published in Paris in 1845; and from his 'Life' by *Cardinal Bausset*, which forms Vol. XII. of this edition, and Vol. XXX. of another one published in Paris in 1854.

sublimest regions of metaphysics. It was reserved for a book far above all human ones to show Bossuet what he was, or rather what he would become ; and this book was *the Bible*. He saw it by chance in his father's study—devoured some pages of it—and begged leave to carry it off. He was then in the class of Rhetoric : it was the first time he had read the Bible ; and his soul experienced a kind of emotion that it had never before known. Every charm of secular poetry and literature appeared to him eclipsed by the magnificent images and lofty conceptions of the sacred writings, which at once completely took possession of him. In his later years, Bossuet loved to recall this first impression, and would feel it again as vividly as when, in the days of his youth, this sudden light had come to shine upon his intellect and give warmth to his soul.'

This marvellous early impression, we are further told, was confirmed and developed by encouragement from *Nicolas Cornet*, head of the *Collège de Navarre* in the Paris University, where young Bossuet was sent for his later education ; and the result of it was a passion for the Holy Scriptures, and an ardent, minute, and vigorous method of studying them, which fully account

—not merely for his extraordinary knowledge of them—but for the wonderful practical effect, on heart and intellect alike, produced by his use of them in his sermons and other writings.

The *Méditations sur l'Evangile*, which form, with their companion volume the *Elévations sur les Mystères*, a very important portion of Bossuet's Biblical works, are specially interesting as being quite different in style and method from the sermons and 'discourses,' which are so much more generally known. They are not argumentative; they are not written on any definite plan; they do not—as many of his sermons do—work out a subject in regular sequence under headings or divisions. They are simply his own thoughts on the Sacred Text, put down as they arose in the mind of one to whom the Word of God was in truth as his daily bread. He said of them himself that he did not intend them to be a dogmatic treatise on religion. 'If you think'—he wrote—'that I am going to resolve all doubts and to satisfy your curious desires, you are mistaken. I have not taken pen in hand here to teach you the thoughts of man.'

Nevertheless, disconnected as their form may be, these two works are held, by those who know Bossuet well, to contain the whole body

of religious knowledge—the *Elévations* developing all Christian dogma, and the *Méditations* all Christian morality. The biographer quoted above says that the effect of a really thorough study of them is a peculiar repose of mind and satisfaction of heart, arising from the fact that they make the mysteries of religion as clear *as God intended them to be made*, and shed a soft light on the Gospel precepts which shows these to be as well fitted to make man happy as to teach him virtue. He declares that by reading them we learn to know 'God, mankind and ourselves'; that they alone may serve the purpose of many books on religion and morality; and that *De la Harpe* was right when he said: 'Those who have not read the *Méditations* and *Elévations* do not really know Bossuet.'

These works were written for the Visitation nuns at Meaux. The *Méditations sur l'Evangile* —of which the 'Sermon on the Mount,' here presented in an English version, is a small portion —were written first, though in point of subject they are rather the sequel than the introduction to the *Elévations sur les Mystères*. In style they are more simple than the latter, which treat of the very origins of religion and of the sublimity and power of God; whilst the subject of the

Meditations is 'Jesus Christ Crucified' and His immediate teaching to man.

How Bossuet wished the book to be practically used he himself tells us in a short preface that he wrote for it, a *verbatim* translation of which here follows.

F. M. C.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The texts of Holy Scripture quoted in these meditations have been carefully compared throughout with the English *Douay* Version, in the words of which they are here given.

It is thought best to inform readers of this, as, should the book be used by non-Catholics, they may be here and there surprised at the wording of certain texts which have become familiar to the English-speaking world in the phraseology of the 'Authorized' Version.

Preface

OF all the sermons delivered by Jesus Christ, the most remarkable, as to both time and circumstances, are :—

First, the one He delivered on the mountain at the beginning of His preaching, which contains the chief precepts of the New Law, and shows forth its true spirit.

Secondly, those which He preached at the end of His life, from His triumphal entry into Jerusalem up to His death ; whilst of these, again, the most remarkable are the two that He gave during the Last Supper and the time following upon it, up to the night of His agony in the Garden of Olives.

We will distribute the reading of Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, and of these other two just mentioned, into days, so that a quarter of an hour may be spent every morning, and the same every evening, in devout meditation on them.

At each fresh Truth proposed we must pause a little to make an act of Faith : — 'I be-

lieve; that is true; He who says it is Truth itself.'

Thus we shall look at each particular Truth that He reveals as a portion of that Truth which is Jesus Christ Himself: that is to say, which is God Himself; but God coming near to us—communicating and uniting Himself to us: —for this is what Jesus Christ *is*.

We must, then, reflect on each particular Truth that He has revealed by His own mouth; fix our hearts on it; love it:—because it unites us to God through Jesus Christ Who taught it to us, and Who has Himself told us that He is *the Way, the Truth and the Life*.[1]

[1] John xiv. 6.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION v

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE ix

BOSSUET'S PREFACE TO THE 'MEDITATIONS' . . . xi

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

		PAGE
1st Day.	Summary of the Sermon: eternal happiness set forth under divers names in the Eight Beatitudes	1
2nd Day	First Beatitude: *to be poor in spirit* . .	6
3rd Day.	Second Beatitude: *to be meek* . .	8
4th Day.	Third Beatitude: *to be a mourner* . .	13
5th Day.	Fourth Beatitude: *to hunger and thirst after justice*	16
6th Day.	Fifth Beatitude: *to be merciful* . .	20
7th Day.	Sixth Beatitude: *to be clean of heart* . .	22
8th Day.	Seventh Beatitude: *to be Peace-makers* .	25
9th Day.	Eighth and last Beatitude: *to suffer for Justice*	29

		PAGE
10*th Day.*	The true Christian character, as shown in the Eight Beatitudes, and its opposite characteristics	31
11*th Day.*	Four marks of a Christian	34
12*th Day.*	How Christian Justice excels that of the Heathen and the Jews	41
13*th Day.*	Hate, anger, insulting words: what is their punishment?	48
14*th Day.*	Reconciliation	53
15*th Day.*	Delicacy of Chastity: the plucking out of one's eye, the cutting off of one's hand: the indissolubility of marriage . .	56
16*th Day.*	We are not to swear: Christian simplicity .	59
17*th Day.*	Brotherly love: extent of Christian Perfection	64
18*th Day.*	Extent of Christian Perfection (*continued*) .	67
19*th Day.*	Relapses	71
20*th Day.*	Vain-glory in good works	74
21*st Day.*	Prayer; and the presence of God in secret .	78
22*nd Day.*	The Lord's Prayer: *Our Father* . . .	81
23*rd Day.*	*Who art in Heaven*	85
24*th Day.*	*Hallowed be Thy Name*	87

		PAGE
25*th Day.*	*Give us this day our daily bread* . .	90
26*th Day.*	*Forgive us our trespasses* . . .	93
27*th Day.*	*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*	95
28*th Day.*	Of Fasting	98
29*th Day.*	The treasure in heaven: The single eye: The impossibility of serving two masters .	100
30*th Day.*	On having no anxiety about this life, but trusting in Providence . . .	104
31*st Day.*	We are not to be like the heathen . .	107
32*nd Day.*	Of seeking God and His justice, and in what manner	108
33*rd Day.*	Of avarice and riches again: we are not to put confidence in possessions . .	111
34*th Day.*	What God does for the generality of plants and animals: We are to count ourselves as His favourite flock . . .	114
35*th Day.*	The same subject: of shunning all avarice .	117
36*th Day.*	'Judge not'.	119
37*th Day.*	On seeing the smallest faults of others, and being blind to our own greatest ones .	123
38*th Day.*	The Holy Thing: Due discernment in preaching the Gospel . . .	124

		PAGE
39*th Day.*	Of praying with faith; and of 'asking,' 'seeking' and 'knocking' . . .	126
40*th Day.*	Perseverance and humility in prayer .	128
41*st Day.*	'Pray without ceasing'	130
42*nd Day.*	We are to call upon God with repeated and importunate cries	132
43*rd Day.*	Grounds of hope in prayer	133
44*th Day.*	Asking through Jesus Christ: The qualities of a perfect prayer	135
45*th Day.*	Summary of Christian morality: What is its true end?	138
46*th Day.*	What true virtue consists in . . .	140
47*th Day.*	The wonderful effects and invincible strength of Jesus Christ's doctrine . .	143

First Day

SUMMARY OF THE SERMON

Eternal happiness set forth under divers names in the Eight Beatitudes.—Matt. v. 1-12.

THE sole end of man is to be happy, and Jesus Christ came only to give us the means of being so. The source of all good is to place happiness where it ought to be; and the source of all evil is to place it where it ought not to be. Suppose, then, we have said, 'I wish to be happy,' we have next to see how we may become so:—to see in what end happiness consists, and what are the means of obtaining it.

Now, we shall find the end set forth in each one of the Eight Beatitudes, for Eternal Happiness is the subject of them all, but described by various names. Thus, in the first it appears as a kingdom, in the second as the promised land, in the third as true and perfect consolation, and in the fourth as the fulfilment of all our longings.

In the fifth, we find it as the final act of mercy that shall free us from every evil and bestow on us every good. In the sixth it is named by its true name, which is the Vision of God. In the seventh it is set forth as the seal set on our adoption; and in the eighth, once more as the Kingdom of Heaven. Here, then, we have the *end* throughout; but as there are several *means*, each beatitude proposes one of these to us, whilst all of them together must bring about man's final happiness.

If the Sermon on the Mount is in itself the summary of all Christian doctrine, the Beatitudes are the summary of the sermon. For instance:—Our Lord tells us that our justice must abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees; but His whole teaching on the subject is contained in the one saying: 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice.' For if they are really hungering for it, how abundantly shall they not receive it, seeing that it is always there ready to fill those who desire it for their true food? Then shall we keep even its smallest laws, like to famished men who will not leave a bit—not a crumb, so to speak—of their bread.

If we are commanded not to ill-treat our

neighbour in speech, this will be a natural consequence of the gentle and 'peace-making' spirit to which the kingdom and rank of a child of God are promised.

You are not to look at a woman with an evil thought—that is, 'Blessed are the pure in heart'; and your heart will be pure when you have purged it of all sensual desires. Hence, those are happy who spend their lives in mourning and in a saving sadness rather than in pleasures that intoxicate.

'Swear not . . . let your speech be "yea, yea; no, no."' This, again, springs naturally from meekness; for he who is meek is humble, and not too much attached to his own view, so as to be too positive; he says what he thinks simply, in a sincere and gentle spirit.

When we are filled with that spirit of mercy which shall draw down on us yet more abundant mercy than our own, we easily forgive injuries; and when we are meek and peaceable we readily yield to others, who may show violence, even more than we have promised.

It is not only because a man is meek, merciful, and peaceable that he loves his friends and his enemies, but because of that hunger after justice spoken of above, which makes him wish to

have it for solid use, not for ostentatious display. We love fasting, too, when we find our chief nourishment in truth and justice; and fasting purifies the heart and destroys sensuality.

Our heart is pure, moreover, when we keep our good deeds for the eyes of God alone; when we are content to be seen by Him, and do not make virtue serve as a cloak for deceiving the world and attracting the notice and love of our fellows. A pure heart gives a single eye and a straight aim.

The poor in spirit avoid avarice and the seeking after possessions; the meek and the peacemakers judge not, because meekness banishes pride.

Purity of heart makes us try to become worthy of the Holy Eucharist, and prevents our receiving this heavenly bread as if we were dogs.

Once more, when we hunger and thirst after justice we ask—we seek—we knock; for we beg of God to give us the only true goods, and expect them from Him, when we aspire to the Kingdom of Heaven, the Land of the Living, and to nothing else.

Those who count themselves happy at being allowed to suffer poverty, grief, and misfortune for 'justice sake' willingly enter in by the

narrow gate; and those who hunger for justice are not satisfied to say 'Lord, Lord!' with their lips, but feed their hearts on God's Truth, and so build their house firmly on a rock.

The Beatitudes, then, form an abridgment of the whole sermon; but a pleasant abridgment, for in them the command and the reward are always joined. The Kingdom of Heaven, under its divers wonderful names, follows on the possession of righteousness—happiness, on the practice of it.

Second Day

FIRST BEATITUDE

To be poor in spirit.—Matt. v. 3.

WE come now to detail; and Jesus Christ begins thus: '*Blessed are the poor in spirit.*' He means here not only the poor by choice — those who have left all things to follow Him, and to whom He has promised a hundredfold in this world and life everlasting in the next—but all whose hearts are detached from earthly goods. He means both those who are bearing actual poverty without murmuring or impatience, and the rich who hold their possessions without the *spirit of riches:*—that is, without the love of display, the pride, the injustice, and the insatiable craving to get everything for themselves which constitute this spirit. Eternal happiness, under the majestic title of 'kingdom,' belongs to all these—and for a special reason. The particular evil of poverty on earth is to make people con-

temptible, weak, and impotent; and hence happiness is promised in this magnificent form as the corresponding indemnification for this lowliness:—'Blessed are the poor in spirit, *for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*'

At the word 'blessed' the heart swells with joy; when 'poverty' is named it contracts; but it expands afresh at the sound of 'kingdom'—still more when it is the 'Kingdom of Heaven.' For who would not suffer for the sake of such a kingdom: a realm to be enjoyed in company with God Himself, and inseparably from Him:—eternal, spiritual, abounding in all things, and whence all trouble is banished for ever?

O Lord, I offer Thee everything—I give up everything—that I may share in such a realm! May I only be sufficiently stripped of all other goods to hope for it! In heart and mind I deprive myself of them all; and when it shall be Thy will to deprive me actually, I submit to Thee.

All Christians are under this obligation; but the humble Religious must go further, and must actually rejoice in being despoiled of all things, dead to the world, and incapable of holding possessions. O happy deprivation, which gives God in return!

Third Day

SECOND BEATITUDE

To be meek.—Matt. v. 4.

'BLESSED are the meek.' 'Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.'[1] *Meek*—that is to say, free from bitterness, from presumption, from disdain; never taking advantage of others, nor insulting the unfortunate, nor even offending the proud, but trying to win them by gentleness; mild even with those who are sharp; not meeting temper with temper, or violence with violence, but moderating excess in others by gentle words. Such is true meekness.

There are false kinds of meekness — contemptuous, full of hidden pride, effrontery and affectation of mildness—which are more unkind and more insulting than open roughness.

But let us reflect on the meekness of Jesus Christ, of which the Holy Spirit speaks as

[1] Matt. xii. 29.

follows in Isaias :—'Behold my servant, I will uphold him! my elect, my soul delighteth in him. I have given my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor have respect to person, neither shall his voice be heard abroad. The bruised reed he shall not break and smoking flax he shall not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.'[1]

This is what Isaias saw in spirit; and what St Matthew, in act, found so beautiful—so remarkable—so worthy of Jesus Christ—that he takes special pains to extol it.[2]

He is meek towards the weakest: though a reed, already feeble, may have been made more so by bruising, far from taking any advantage of such weakness, He turns aside that He may not tread upon it. Do you, then, act thus towards your neighbour. Instead of seeking occasion to injure him, take care that you do not walk over him and complete his destruction by inadvertence, and as though 'by the way.' But who is this weak neighbour if not the hot-tempered man who has got into a passion? He is bruised by his own rage; the feeble reed has bent itself in the act of striking. Do not you

[1] Isa. xlii. 1-3. [2] Matt. xii. 18-20.

destroy it utterly by crushing it under foot. This, again, is what is meant by the 'smoking flax.' Anger in a heart has made it catch fire; the smoke is some insult offered to you by your neighbour in this angry state. Take great care not to quench the fire by violence. Listen to St Paul's exhortation—'Not revenging yourselves, my dearly beloved, but give place unto wrath.'[1] Let it smoke a little and go out of its own accord. Left to itself it will burn out, so do not stifle it; but let the smoke rise and lose itself vainly in the air, without annoying or even reaching you.

This is just what our Saviour does when He bears so many insults without bitterness. 'Thou hast a devil;' they say to Him. 'Who seeketh to kill thee?'[2] And He replies, unmoved, 'I have not a devil, but I honour my Father, and you dishonour me.'[3] And on another occasion, when they reproach Him with the same thing: 'Are you angry at me because I have healed the whole man on the Sabbath day?'[4] Here, as you see, He does not extinguish the smoking flax, but leaves it to burn out, to see whether the unfortunate people, tired of covering so

[1] Rom. xii. 19. [2] John vii. 20.
[3] *Ibid.* viii. 49. [4] *Ibid.* vii. 23.

meek and humble a man with insults, will not return to their senses. Such, throughout, was the conduct of the Son of God, especially in His Passion. 'When he was reviled he did not revile; when he suffered, he threatened not.'[1] And again, to the man who gave Him a blow, 'If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why strikest thou me?'[2]

To Him, truly, it belongs to say, 'Learn of *me*, for I am meek and humble of heart.'[3] He is rightly compared to a lamb, the meekest of all animals, which not only allows itself to be 'sheared,' but was 'led as a sheep to the slaughter,' without opening its mouth.[4]

'Blessed are the meek, for *they shall possess the land*.' The land promised to Abraham is called 'a land flowing with milk and honey.'[5] Everything sweet abounds there; it is the type of Heaven and of the Church. What makes us harsh is the pouring forth upon others of our own inward venom and bitterness. When we have a spirit calmed by possession of the only real good and by the joy of a pure conscience, as there is then nothing bitter within our hearts,

[1] 1 Pet. ii. 23. [2] John xviii. 23. [3] Matt. xi. 29.
[4] Isa. liii. 7 [5] Exod. iii. 8, etc.

so we have only mildness for others. The true mark of innocence, either preserved or recovered, is gentleness.

Man is so prone to take offence that he is often offended with the very people who are doing him good. How irritable a sick man is with his nurses! Almost the whole world is diseased in that way; and hence it is that we are always getting angry with those who advise us for our own good, even more so with those who have the authority to do it than with others. The innate pride that we carry about with us is the cause of this. 'Blessed,' therefore, 'are the meek, for they shall possess the land' where all sweetness abounds, because the joy there is perfect.

Fourth Day

THIRD BEATITUDE

To be a mourner.—Matt. v. 5.

'BLESSED are those who mourn.' Whether they are mourning for their troubles or their sins, they are happy, and shall receive the only true consolation :—which is that of the next life, where 'there shall be no more mourning nor crying,' and where all tears shall be wiped away.[1]

Abraham said to the wicked rich man, 'Thou didst receive good things in this life, and Lazarus evil things ; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented.'[2] That is—he is happy, for he suffered patiently ; his painful condition often forced him to mourn over excessive misfortunes, and he got no consolation from his fellows :—the pitiless rich man did not even deign to look at him. But because he bore

[1] Apoc. xxi. 4. [2] Luke xvi. 25.

all with patience, he is comforted, and God has received him into the place where no troubles exist.

'—the world shall rejoice, and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be changed into joy.'[1] This is our Saviour's promise to His disciples. Sadness and joy come alternately: he who rejoices shall be afflicted; he who is afflicted shall rejoice. 'Blessed,' then, 'are those who mourn, *for they shall be comforted*.'[2]

But, amongst all who mourn, none shall be sooner consoled than those who weep for their own sins. In every other case, grieving over a trouble, far from being a remedy, only increases the evil itself. Sin is the only evil that can be cured by deploring it. Let us sinners, then, weep without ceasing. Let our eyes be turned into inexhaustible streams, whose incessant flow shall furrow our cheeks, as the Psalmist says. The remission of sins is the fruit of such holy tears. Ah! ten thousand times happy those who mourn their sins! They shall indeed be comforted.

And what of those happy ones, again, who shed tears of pure love and tenderness? Their hearts melt within them, as Holy Scripture says,

[1] John xvi. 20. [2] Matt. v. 5.

and seem as though they would flow forth through their eyes. But who can tell us the true cause of such tears—who can explain it? Often those who have actually experienced them cannot tell what has called them forth. It may be now the goodness of a Father, now the condescension of a King; then the absence of a Divine Bridegroom, or the darkness that He leaves in the soul as He withdraws; or yet once more His tender voice, as He returns, calling His faithful spouse. But oftenest of all it is something that no man can tell.

Fifth Day

FOURTH BEATITUDE

To hunger and thirst after justice.—Matt. v. 6.

'BLESSED are those who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled.' 'Hunger and thirst' means an ardent, eager, and urgent longing, which proceeds from extreme need.

'Seek ye the kingdom of God and his justice.'[1] Justice reigns in Heaven, and ought to reign also in the Church, which is often called the Kingdom of Heaven. It really reigns whenever we give to God what is His due; for when we do this we at the same time give, for love of the Creator, all that is due to creatures, whom we look at in Him. By the same act, again, we give all that is due to ourselves; for when we have filled ourselves with God we possess all that we can contain. Then have we fulfilled all justice, as God said to St John.

[1] Matt. vi. 33.

The soul then hungers and thirsts no more, for she has her true food. 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me,' said the Saviour, 'that I may perfect his work.'[1] This, therefore, is what Christ calls 'all justice':—to accomplish in all things the perfectly just will of our Heavenly Father, and to make it the rule of our own wills also in everything. But when we do the will of God, He will do ours. The Psalmist sang: 'He will do the will of those who fear him,'[2] and thus he will satisfy all their desires. Blessed are those who desire justice as eagerly as they long for meat and drink when they are exhausted with hunger and thirst; for then shall they be filled. With what, indeed, should we be filled if not with justice? We shall be partly satisfied even in this life; for the just man will become more just, and the holy man more holy in return for his eager longing; but perfect satisfaction will come in heaven, where eternal justice will be given to us, together with the fulness of the love of God. 'I shall be satisfied,' declares the Psalmist, 'when Thy glory shall appear.'[3]

But are we always to thirst for justice? Our Saviour said to the Samaritan woman, 'He who

[1] John iv. 34. [2] Ps. cxliv. 19. [3] *Ibid.* xvi. 15.

drinks of this water'—that is, of earthly pleasures—'shall thirst again; but he who drinks the water that I will give him shall never thirst; for the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.'[1] He is, then, never to thirst again? In one sense, certainly, never:—for he will never again wish for any pleasure, any joy, any good, except what he possesses in Jesus Christ. Yet in another sense he will always thirst; for he will never cease to desire this supreme good itself, and will long to possess it more and more completely. Thus, then, his thirst will be everlasting:—but so also will be the quenching of his thirst, as he will have that ever-springing fountain within him. He will not suffer the painful and exhausting thirst of those who seek the pleasures of the senses. He will continually thirst for justice; but with his lips always held to the source of life that he owns, this thirst can never weary or weaken him. 'If any man thirst,' cries the Son of God, 'let him come to me and drink. He that believeth in me . . . out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.'[2] Come, then, ye holy souls—come to Jesus! Desire—drink

[1] John iv. 13, 14. [2] *Ibid.* vii. 37, 38.

—be satisfied! Fear not that this heavenly stream will ever fail you; the fountain is greater than your thirst; its abundance far beyond your need. '*Fons vincit sitientem*,' says St Augustine.

Sixth Day

FIFTH BEATITUDE

To be merciful.—Matt. v. 7.

'BLESSED are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' The most beautiful fruit of love is to be touched by the ills of others. 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,' said Jesus Christ. This saying had not been recorded by the Evangelists, but God chose St Paul to have the honour of handing it down to us. 'Remember,' said that Apostle,[1] 'the word of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "It is a more blessed thing to give rather than to receive."' Blessed, then, are those who both give and really like giving better than receiving. Blessed, furthermore, is he who invites to his feast, not the rich who can return his hospitality, but the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind. 'Then,' said our Saviour,[2] 'thou shalt be blessed, because they

[1] Acts xx. 35. [2] Luke xiv. 12-14.

have not wherewith to make thee recompense, for recompense shall be made thee at the resurrection of the just.' Blessed, therefore, are the merciful, who give without hope of receiving anything[1] from those towards whom they show mercy, for they themselves shall obtain unending mercy from God.

We must then have mercy on all we may see in suffering: on the sick and the afflicted:—we must soothe them by words of comfort and wise counsel if we have nothing else to give:—help them to bear their troubles, and if possible share these with them.

This is the most beautiful of all offerings. '*I will have mercy and not sacrifice*,' as He Himself has said.

[1] Matt. ix. 13.

Seventh Day

SIXTH BEATITUDE

To be clean of heart.—Matt. v. 8.

'BLESSED are the clean of heart.' Who can tell the beauty of a pure heart? A spotless mirror—a piece of perfectly refined gold—a diamond of the purest water—an absolutely clear fountain—none of them equal the beauty and the cleanness of a pure heart. To produce such a heart, every bit of dirt must be removed:—and especially all that comes from the pleasures of sense, for one drop from the cup of these pleasures will disturb this beautiful fountain. How lovely, how truly ravishing even, is the untroubled stream of an unspotted heart! God takes pleasure in seeing Himself reflected in it, as in a highly-polished glass, in all His beauty; and, piercing it with His rays, He makes the mirror itself appear all resplendent as a sun. God's own purity then becomes united to that

which He Himself has worked in us; and our illuminated sight beholds Him shining within our souls and lighting them up with an everlasting radiance. 'Blessed,' therefore, 'are the clean of heart, *for they shall see God.*'[1]

Let us love chastity above all other virtues, for it is she who makes the heart pure. In every object that attracts our love let us see a danger of sullying our hearts, or of plunging them deeper in the very mire whence we should make every effort to snatch them.

'Blessed is the pure in heart, for he shall see God.' The last two words alone are enough for the soul to feed upon for a whole day. 'He shall see God':—that is, he shall behold all charity, all beauty, all perfection; goodness itself—the source of all goodness—all goodness in one, as He Himself has declared. 'I will show thee all good,'[2] He said to Moses, when He talked with him in the tabernacle. To see so perfect an object, and to love it, are one and the same thing. The man who is pure in heart, then, will behold and love; but he will also be loved; he will sing the praises of God whom he is to see and love for ever. He will be filled with the abundance of his dwelling-place, and intoxicated

[1] Matt. v. 8. [2] Exod. xxxiii. 19.

with the torrent of his delights. Happy being! But this can only be for the pure in heart, and hence he is blessed. Let him, then, who is not pure hasten to come forth from the slough wherein he lies wallowing; let him wash off the filthy stains that degrade and disfigure him!

Eighth Day

SEVENTH BEATITUDE

MILWAUKEE 7. WIS.

To be Peace-makers.—Matt. v. 9.

'BLESSED are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.' God is called 'the God of Peace.'[1] He 'maketh men of one manner to dwell in a house,'[2] says the Psalmist. His goodness brings all things together. He has built up this world of materials most discordant with each other in kind and quality; He makes night and day, summer and winter, heat and cold—and so with all the rest—co-operate for the right maintenance of the universe and the preservation of the human race. He admits His enemies to His Peace; and Jesus Christ says that, after His own example, you 'must love your enemies and do good to them that hate you.' Further, you 'must pray for them that persecute you, that

[1] Cor. xiv. 33. [2] Ps. lxvii. 7,

you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise on the good and the bad, and raineth on the just and the unjust,'[1] as we shall see afterwards. 'Blessed,' then, 'are the peaceable'—those who love peace and promote it—'they shall be called the children of God,' because they will bear the character of so good a Father.

In lands where God is unknown, the sun is no dimmer, the rain waters the fields and pastures no less abundantly, and is no less refreshing or fertilising, than in Christian lands. Thus, as St Paul said, 'God left not himself without testimony.'[2] The sun, when it rises, bears witness to His all-embracing goodness, for it appears no later, nor with any less brilliant colours, for the enemies of God than for His friends. Do you, then, at sunrise adore the God of pardon; and never show an ungracious countenance to your neighbour when the heavens, and God himself—if one may say so—look on him with such a gentle and serene one.

Jesus Christ, only Son of the Heavenly Father, is the great Peace-maker:—'killing all enmities in himself . . . preaching peace to you that were afar off, and to them that were

[1] Matt. v. 44, 45. [2] Acts xiv. 16.

nigh';[1] and 'making peace through the blood of his cross, both as to the things on earth and the things that are in heaven,'[2] as St Paul says.

After the example of this only Son, the children of adoption must take on them the character of their Father, and show themselves true sons of God by their love of peace.

This grace of being children of God will have its perfect fulfilment in heaven, according to our Lord's saying that they 'are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection,' —that is, born anew by the resurrection.[3]

Let us then be truly peace-makers; let us always have on our lips words of forgiveness and peace to soften the bitterness that our brethren may display towards ourselves or towards others. Let us even do our best to bring together those who are on bad terms; to prevent enmities, coolnesses, indifference; in short, to reconcile all who are divided. This is to do the work of God, and to show ourselves His children by imitating His goodness.

How far from this spirit are people who like to fall out with each other; who, when their neighbours are already disturbed and weakened with angry feeling, add to their irritation by

[1] Ephes. ii. 14-17. [2] Colossians i. 20. [3] Luke xx. 36.

encouraging misunderstandings:—often entirely unfounded; and often increased by exaggerating circumstances, by saying what should be left unsaid and so reviving the remembrance of what should be forgotten, or by the utterance of sharp and contemptuous words.

Ninth Day

EIGHTH AND LAST BEATITUDE

To suffer for Justice.—Matt. v. 10.

'BLESSED are they that suffer persecution for Justice' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.' All those who suffer for having done right—for having set a good example—for having obeyed with simplicity—or for having put people who live irregularly to shame, so that the blame of causing others to be justly reproved is laid upon them, suffer persecution for Justice' sake. Those also who daily carry their cross, and constantly persecute their own evil desires, suffer persecution for Justice' sake.

This is the last and most perfect of all the Beatitudes, because it is the one that most vividly reproduces the character of the Son of God Himself.

Hence it is that He dwells on this one. Not content with having spoken of it like the rest,

He proceeds to comment on it, saying, 'Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake; be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were before you'[1]:—and not only the prophets, but the Messias Himself.

Thus we are brought back to the beginning and to the reward shown forth in the first Beatitude. Poverty and persecution for Justice' sake equally merit the Kingdom of Heaven.

[1] Matt. v. 11, 12.

Tenth Day

The true Christian character, as shown in the Eight Beatitudes, and its opposite characteristics.—Matt. v. 3, 12; Luke vi. 20, 27.

THE week has gone happily by, and given us a beautiful octave, in going over seven Beatitudes and coming back to our starting-point in the eighth. We have tried to impress upon ourselves eight characteristics of a Christian, which form an abridgment of Christian philosophy:—poverty, meekness, mourning—or disgust with the present life—mercy, love of justice, cleanness of heart, love of peace, and suffering for Justice' sake.

Three of these qualities may appear to be much alike—meekness, mercifulness and love of peace; nevertheless, each of them has its separate character. It is one thing to be peaceable and able to put an end to quarrels either with ourselves or amongst others; another thing to be gentle and meek, so as not to offend or

irritate anybody ; and yet another to be merciful and beneficent.

The characteristics opposed to the eight we have just considered are these :—the spirit of possession or of riches ; bitterness ; love of pleasure ; injustice and hardness ; corruption of heart ; a spirit of quarrelsomeness and misunderstanding ; impatience under afflictions ; and lastly a cowardice that makes us leave off following the law of truth and justice.

We find in St Luke an abridgment of the Beatitudes reduced to four :—to poverty, hunger, mourning, and being hated and persecuted for love of the Son of God.[1] To these four Beatitudes Jesus Christ adds four denunciations on men of the world :—'Woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation. Woe to you that are filled, for you shall hunger. Woe to you that now laugh, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when men shall bless you. For according to these things did their fathers to the false prophets.'[2] Let us, then, be afraid to have our consolation on earth ; afraid to seek it, afraid to receive it, afraid of the praise and approval of the world ; but let us cherish this series of Beatitudes which carries us on from the love of

[1] Luke vi. 20-23. [2] *Ibid.* vi. 24, *seq.*

poverty to that of suffering, and through the love of suffering back to that of poverty; and which bestows upon us the same Kingdom in reward for both.

In conclusion, the teaching of the Beatitudes may be summed up in three sayings, which I would have you weigh well.

The whole teaching of morals is for the sole purpose of making us happy.

Our Heavenly Master places this object first. We must learn of Him the Way to true and eternal happiness.

Eleventh Day

FOUR MARKS OF A CHRISTIAN

Matt. v. 13-20

AFTER this abridgment of Christianity which Jesus Christ sets forth to His disciples, He points out three eminent characteristics that should mark those disciples. Those are: to be '*the salt of the earth*, the *light of the world*, and *extremely strict in keeping the commandments*.' In other words, to have a solid taste for piety, for setting a good example, and for regularity and exactness. To these He further adds a fourth, which is *eminence in perfection*—'unless your justice abound,' etc.; and we then have the complete idea of Christian Justice.

Salt flavours food: it brings out its taste and prevents corruption; and in like manner the behaviour of the true Christian ought to rouse in others a taste for piety. Hence it is that St Paul says, 'Let your speech be always in

grace seasoned with salt';[1] and this is just what those are very far off from whose whole conduct is full of languor and softness. There ought to be a holy vigour in the words of a Christian; he should reprove with strength, and sometimes even give a stinging prick as a grain of salt may do. But we must not put in too much salt at once, for then we shall make the whole mouth burn, instead of merely whetting the appetite by a little smart to the tongue.

To be the 'light of the world' is a degree higher, for it implies giving the example that builds up and enlightens the house of God. This is what we owe to each other; and, contrariwise, if we give one another scandal, that curse will fall upon us which our Saviour called down when He said: 'Woe to the world because of scandals. For it must needs be that scandals come; but, nevertheless, woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh . . . it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the sea.'[2]

Weigh well these words, O you Christians, who fear not to scandalise the feeble and little ones of the Church!

[1] Coloss. iv. 9. [2] Matt. xviii., Mark ix., Luke xvii.

'You are the light of the world.' This is to be understood not only of the pastors, but of all the Faithful. St Paul expresses it thus:—'A crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.'[1] Whilst St Peter says: 'If any man speak, let him speak as the words of God'[2]—that is, as if God spoke through his mouth. It is recorded of St Matthias, by St Clement of Alexandria, that he said that when anyone did wrong in the neighbourhood of a Christian, he was to lay the blame on that Christian neighbour for not having set him a good enough example.

Thirdly, the Christian life demands extreme strictness. The smallest precepts must be attended to, and not one of them despised. Laxity begins with small things, and from them we fall into great evils. 'He who despises the day of small things shall fall little by little.'[3]

For the establishing of this strict Christian Justice, Jesus Christ lays down a fine principle:—that 'the law of God is inviolable, and must be fulfilled in the very least particular.'

He is here considering particularly what had been predicted about *Him* in the law and the

[1] Phil. ii. 15. [2] 1 Peter iv. 11. [3] Eccles. xix. 1.

prophets, whence He says: 'I come to fulfil all things.' In the things predicted by the law grand features appear:—the birth of Christ of a virgin, His sufferings, His cross, His resurrection; and again the conversion of the world and of the Gentiles, with the condemnation and just chastisement of the Jews. These are the great features; but these are not all. There is the *iota*, and the smallest points of the prophecies which have also to be fulfilled. His garments must be divided: they must cast lots for His tunic without seam. See the precision involved in so subtle and accurate a distinction! Here is the *iota*—the minute detail. Then, He is to be sold, which may be called a great circumstance; but the price given for Him is to be *thirty pieces of silver*, and the field is to be bought *of a potter*. Here again is the *iota*, which must no more escape fulfilment than the rest. Thus, also, He must thirst—and His thirst must be quenched with vinegar and gall. He must suffer—that is the great prophecy; but it shall be outside the gates of the city—this is the small one. He is to be sacrificed like the Paschal Lamb; but also His bones, like those of the Lamb, are not to be broken on the Cross—once more the *iota*—and so with all the rest. Speak-

ing more generally, Jesus Christ means to say that everything foretold in figure by the Law shall be truly accomplished in the Gospels, even to the smallest circumstance. The least things are significant in the Old Testament, and the least things must be fulfilled by the New Testament. 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn on the floor.'[1] St Paul applies this to preachers.[2] It is the same with other details. 'Thou shalt not boil a kid in the milk of its dam';[3] and, again, if a bird is found sitting on her nest 'thou shalt not take her with her young, but shalt let her go, keeping the young which thou hast caught. . . . Thou shalt not wear a garment that is woven of linen and wool together. Thou shalt make strings to the hem of the four corners of thy cloak.'[4] All these little details have great meanings, and are intended to inspire Christians with gentleness, moderation, simplicity, uprightness, and all other virtues.

What Our Lord deduces from all this is that we are not to forget the very least of His precepts; for if every single thing that God decreed for His Son must be accomplished in the most

[1] Deut. xxiv. 4.
[2] 1 Tim. v. 17, 18.
[3] Deut. xiv. 21.
[4] *Ibid.* xxii. 6, 7, 11, 12.

minute particulars, and not one may be omitted, how much more must not everything that He has ordained for us be fulfilled?

And now observe to what point this goes. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass.'[1] If the sun were suddenly to disappear—that torch of the world to be extinguished in full noon; if the heavens were to fall on us with a crash, or to roll back from overhead like a self-revolving roof; if the earth gave way under our feet, and its firm foundation were in a moment reduced to powder:—how utterly should we be lost! Yet for the least of God's commandments to be broken is a much worse misfortune and a much more complete loss of all things.

Suppose they are broken, will Jesus Christ—who has said that they shall be kept—be therefore accounted a deceiver? God forbid! For they are always broken on a condition:—that is, that their breach will be punished. Hence, if we ever committed a fault and were able to evade its chastisement, Jesus Christ would have been mistaken; but as we cannot commit the smallest sin without its being brought up at the Judgment—where we shall

[1] Matt. xxiv. 35.

be compelled to render an account, not only of unjust and slanderous words, but of even every idle one—Our Lord's truth is confirmed.

The penalty rectifies the disorder: to sin is disorder; but to be punished when we sin is order: therefore you return by means of the penalty to the state of order that you had quitted by your fault. But to be able to sin with impunity would be the very height of disorder:—not in man, by sinning, but in God, by not punishing. Such disorder as this will never exist, because God, who *is* Order Himself, can be disordered in nothing; and as this Divine order is perfect—perfectly straight, without the slightest deviation—everything that does not follow its course is bruised by contact with it, and must feel the effect of its immovable rectitude.

But, on the other hand, if the threats are certain of fulfilment, so also are the promises. Go, Christian, to your crucifix! There behold all prophecies fulfilled minutely, and say to yourself: 'All things shall come to pass, and the happiness promised to me will not fail. I shall see God, I shall love and praise Him for ever and ever, and all my longings will be satisfied. Amen, amen!'

Twelfth Day

How Christian Justice excels that of the Heathen and the Jews.—Matt. v. 20-47.

JESUS CHRIST, who has hitherto given the characteristics of a Christian life in a more general form, here begins to treat of particular precepts; and, as foundation, He sets down the beautiful principle that Christian 'justice' must 'surpass that' of the most perfect amongst the Jews and their Doctors of the Law.[1] We must therefore be most careful here to understand the full perfection of the Gospel Law, which we swore to observe at our baptism.

To show us our obligations, Christ carefully raises us to the perfection of Christian virtue by three degrees.

First, we are to rise above the wisest of the Pagans, for which reason he said, 'Do not even

[1] Matt. v. 20.

the heathen this?'[1], meaning, 'you must do still more.' We hear of despising riches; have not wise Pagans done so? Of being faithful to our friends; have not the heathen been faithful? Of avoiding fraud and deceit; did not the heathen detest them? Of shunning adultery; did not even the most licentious Pagans hold it in horror?

The second degree is to rise above the Justice of the Law itself and of those who know God. And this, again, we are to accomplish by three degrees, as we avoid respectively three defects in Mosaic 'justice.' The first of these is its being only exterior:—'You Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the dish,' and hence he calls them 'whited sepulchres.'[2] Look at the justice of that Pharisee in St Luke:—'I am not,' he said, 'as the rest of men.' 'And in what then do you excel?' 'I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'[3] He only boasts of the outside, and those are like him who confine themselves to external observances. To say Divine office, to go to church, to attend the Holy Sacrifice and public prayers, to take holy water, to fall on one's knees:—to do any or all of these things, without entering into their

[1] Matt. v. 47. [2] *Ibid.* xxiii. 25-27. [3] Luke i. 11, 12.

inward spirit, is a pharisaical virtue which may appear strict, but which draws forth from Our Lord the just reproach : 'This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.'[1] This is false justice. But what can we say of those who have not even this exterior virtue and exactness, but that they are worse than the Jew and the Pharisee ?

The second defect of Mosaic Justice, as St Paul says, is that 'not knowing the justice of God'—by which He makes us just—'and seeking to establish their own'—that is, thinking they are virtuous of themselves—they 'have not submitted themselves to the justice of God.'[2] They have, in fact, fancied that they did good by their own strength instead of acknowledging that it was God who worked in them.

St Paul had once practised this kind of virtue—but see how he afterwards speaks of it :[3] 'According to the justice that is in the law, conversing without blame.' Observe those words '*without blame*'; one would think that perfection could not be carried further, and yet at once he adds : 'But the things that were gain to me' (according to the Law) 'the same I have counted loss for Christ. Furthermore, I count all

[1] Matt. xv. 8. [2] Rom. x. 3. [3] Philip. iii. 6-9.

things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ: and may be found in him, not having my justice, which is of the law, but that which is of the faith of Christ Jesus, which is of God, justice in faith:'

Here, then, we see this second defect of the Jews' 'justice':—the thinking that we are just by our own merit; which defect makes such virtue impure, and—as St Paul calls it—nothing but dung, because it is nothing but pride. Let us, then, make it our study to avoid this spirit, by humbly attributing to God whatever little good we may do.

But the third defect of justice in the Jewish people was that its actual works were exceedingly imperfect in comparison with the perfection to which man is raised by the Gospel. We are bound by this to reach a greater height of virtue than was even reached by those of the old law who did really well. And wherefore? On account of that 'excellent knowledge' which St Paul says we have of Jesus Christ. And this is one of the truths that our Lord includes in the saying: 'unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees—' &c.

Thus we find Christian justice raised by two degrees towards its proper height :—above that of the wise heathen, and above that of the followers of the old law. Hence it is that Pagan and Jew will bear testimony against us—the Ninevites, the Queen of Saba, Sodom and Gomorrha—whose iniquities we shall have surpassed, because we *ought* to surpass the holiness of even the most virtuous. This will help us to form some idea of the grandeur of Christian justice.

But we have to reach something yet more excellent : that is, the third degree, which is perfection. In this degree Christian Justice is to rise *above itself*. 'Not,' said St Paul,[1] 'as though I had already attained and were already perfect : but I follow after :'—like a man who does not hold himself to have obtained what he desires : *Unum autem* :—that is, all I do, my whole aim, my one thought, is, 'forgetting the things that are behind' :—observe, all the progress he has made is nothing ; he neither stops nor rests there : —'to stretch forth myself to those that are before.' Mark that word he '*stretches himself forth*' : he makes an effort : he in some sort comes out of himself : he, after a manner, dislocates himself, by the exertion he makes to go forward.

[1] Philip. iii. 12, 13.

Here, then, is the true Christian, the real just man. He believes himself to have done nothing; for, should he think himself virtuous enough, he is not virtuous at all. He must therefore be incessantly advancing and going forth from one state to another. 'Be you therefore perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.'[1] At least have the will to be so; for to rest upon what one has done, as if one thought it sufficient, is, in fact, to renounce the attainment of true justice. Nay, more, if you do not go forward you go back, contrary to the Gospel precept. For what does our Saviour decree about those who 'look back'?[2] That they are 'not fit for the Kingdom of Heaven.'

Hence it is that He declares it necessary to 'hunger and thirst after justice.' A mere ordinary desire is not enough; it must be such a desire as impels us to seek food to keep us alive:—a keen and unconquerable longing that we should constantly rouse up afresh in ourselves. In whatever state you may be, you should always have this hunger and thirst, because your interior capacity is infinite, as also is the 'justice' that you long for.

On this foundation of perfect Christian virtue

[1] Matt. v. 48. [2] Luke ix. 62.

Jesus Christ builds up the whole edifice—that is, all the precepts of the gospel—so as to raise us respectively above the heathen, the Jews, and ourselves; all of which is included in the saying: 'Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect'; and which His apostle has expressed in the fashion we have seen above.

Thirteenth Day

Hate, anger, insulting words: what is their punishment?—Matt. v. 21, 22

AFTER this beautiful preparation, giving such a fine idea of Christian justice, Jesus Christ begins to regulate our duty to our neighbour, and He teaches us how far we must avoid injuring him.

St John says that 'whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer,'[1] and Our Lord reputes him as such. He therefore says that it is not only by killing that we 'shall be in danger of the judgment,' but also 'whosoever is angry with his brother'; and that 'whosoever shall say *Raca*'—*i.e.*, shall say an angry and contemptuous word—'shall be in danger of the Council; but whosoever shall go so far as to say *thou fool*, shall be in danger of hell fire.'[2]

Here these three degrees of injury must be

[1] John iii. 15. [2] Matt. v. 21, 22.

well weighed:—to get angry—to show one's anger by some passionate expression—and to offer atrocious insults and treat one's brother as a fool. They must further be compared with the three corresponding penalties:—the judgment, the Council, and the fire.

'The judgment' means capital punishment, since, according to the ancients, it followed murder, which the Law punished infallibly by death. But Christ, in order to show how slight a thing is human justice compared to Divine, allots the penalty of 'judgment'—that is, the extreme punishment inflicted by *human judgments*—to the lowest degree of injury: to simple anger. He means by this that anger against a brother is in itself a sin worthy of death before God. Hence we must not doubt that a mortal sin is committed when anybody remains voluntarily estranged from his brother, which is the case when we keep up anger against him, because then anger is turned into hate. The only way by which we can avoid mortal sin when we have such feelings, is by fighting hard against the bad inclination; for, if we let it get mastery over the heart, charity is destroyed.

The second degree of punishment is 'the

Council,' which expression refers to the higher Jewish tribunal that was above the one called the 'Judgment.' In the lesser one private crimes, if necessary, were punished with death; but the *Sanhedrin*, or Supreme Council of the nation, was more severe, inasmuch as it judged crimes concerning the State, and the government and religion of God's people:—and against it there was no appeal. To express the just chastisement of those who give way to the second degree of anger—*i.e.*, of showing their hate by angry or contemptuous words—Jesus Christ places it within the power of what is most severe and inflexible amongst men, which is the extreme rigour of the sovereign National Council.

Then comes the last degree, which was to offer atrocious insults, such as to call one's brother '*thou fool*';[1] and for this offence there was nothing human left by which to express the vengeance it deserves except a valley near Jerusalem, held as abominable, and called 'the valley of corpses and cinders.' It was there that, in the days when the people of God were given up to idolatry, the Israelites burnt their children

[1] 'An expression then looked upon as a heinous injury, when uttered with contempt, spite or malice.' (*Note in Douay Version.*)

in honour of the infamous idol Moloch, and where they then threw their cinders and half-burnt bodies.

Tradition further declared that the corpses of Sennacherib's soldiers had been thrown there in a heap, so that the valley swarmed with worms that had come out of their corpses, which were also half burnt and marked with fire. This place was called 'the valley of the son of Ennom —or of Benennom—';[1] whence, by change of B to G, we get *Gehennom—Gehenna—Gehenne*; by which word *hell*—the hell of the lost, with its devouring flames and gnawing worms—was afterwards expressed; of which our Saviour says that 'their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished.'

It is, then, to this valley of corpses—also called the valley of death—that Jesus Christ compares the frightful punishment of those who treat their brethren as madmen and fools. If He decrees such a punishment for insults only, how must those be tormented who strike and kill? The Son of God does not even mention such, as not choosing to suppose that they could exist among His own people; but is content with leaving it to be inferred how acts of violence

[1] 2 Kings xxiii. 10; 2 Paral. xxviii. 3.

will be punished, when words alone are subject to such terrible rigour.

Let us, therefore, weigh carefully each of our words, since they are weighed with such exactness in the supreme judgment of God.

Fourteenth Day

Reconciliation.—Matt. v. 23-26

WE come now to a further beautiful and grand commandment, which makes us understand how God loves peace, when He orders us, as He does, to be reconciled with our brother before we approach the altar. He will not receive any offering that is made by a heart full of resentment or by hands inclined to vengeance.

We ought very specially to notice this saying: 'If thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee.' It is not only when you have given him cause for displeasure, but if he has merely taken ill something you have done, that you must try to come to friendly terms with him; and this, lest you should perhaps come to hate him if you found that he hated you. The first gift that we must offer to God is a heart free from all coldness and all unkindness towards our fellow-men. And we should

not even wait for the Day of Communion. The actual day of oblation, when we shall be assisting together—or even alone—at the Holy Sacrifice, ought to be *preceded* by reconciliation.

But we must carry the love of peace yet farther, for St Paul says, 'Let not the sun go down upon your anger.'[1] The darkness would increase our vexation, our anger would return as we woke, and become more bitter. Dark and melancholy passions—amongst which are hate, revenge, and jealousy—grow stronger in the night hours, just as wounds and some kinds of diseases do.

In quarrels, law-suits, and every kind of dissension, we 'deliver' one another to 'the officer,' because we mutually offend each other:—therefore we have reason to fear lest we be cast into that 'prison' whence we shall not go out 'till we re-pay the last farthing,'[2] according to the strictest justice. We should therefore come to some voluntary agreement, rather than appeal to a verdict which will serve to increase our bitterness. This is a point to be seriously considered.

St Augustine says that this 'adversary' with whom we are 'to be at agreement betimes,'

[1] Ephes. iv. 26. [2] Matt. v. 25, 26.

whilst we are 'in the way with him,' is *the Truth*, which condemns us in this life; and which in the next delivers us to the executioner, who will compel us to pay this last farthing. That is, who will send us to dwell eternally in that frightful prison, since we can never then make satisfaction for our crimes.

Fifteenth Day

Delicacy of Chastity: the plucking out of one's eye, the cutting off of one's hand: the indissolubility of marriage.—Matt. v. 27-32.

IN all that concerns chastity we must fear even so much as a look, for by this it is that the poison enters. 'Take care,' Moses said, 'not to let your eyes and your thoughts go astray after divers things.'[1] Job also, with the same object, said, 'I made a covenant with my eyes';[2] *i.e.*, that he would always keep them restrained, not wandering and aimless. The veil of consecrated virgins is the sign and the instrument of this restraint. Their life is a mystery whence profane eyes are banished; they wish neither to see nor be seen. Here is the first instruction of Jesus Christ on this subject.

The second treats of renunciation. This means that we must renounce not only ties of the pleasantest kind, but even those that seem

[1] Numb. xv. 39. [2] Job. xxxi. 1.

positively necessary to our lives, rather than imperil our salvation. We must learn the secret of fleeing from every immediate occasion of sin:—that is, from all that has formerly brought us to shipwreck; whilst we must keep in fear of even the most distant, and be constantly on the watch. We must be *violent* in all that concerns this subject, going so far as to cut off our right hand or foot, or to pluck out our eyes. For—as far as it is possible—we should here even avoid having to fight with the temptation, as we are sure to be neither courageous nor firm with ourselves for long. 'If thy right eye . . . if thy right hand, scandalise thee'[1]—*i.e.*, if those people who are so dear to you are a temptation to you to fall—separate yourself from them. Nay:—go further. Leave them if they will only cause you to 'scandalise' your fellow; for whatever you may do that brings about his sin, will be for you a fall such as would overtake that man who should 'have a mill-stone hanged about his neck, and be drowned in the depth of the sea.'[2]

The third point of instruction on this matter concerns the indissolubility of marriage. The teaching may induce us, however, to carry our thoughts higher than the mere permanence of

[1] Matt. v. 29, 30. [2] *Ibid.* xviii. 6.

the tie; for if this indissoluble bond symbolises the inseparable union of Jesus Christ with His Church, souls who have entered upon this blessed contract ought to keep their faith with Christ Himself, and never cause divorce between themselves and Him.

With this object, the smallest things that might displease the Heavenly Spouse must be avoided; for open ruptures are not the only things to be feared in marriage, but the least coldness. Without care, all such *tend* to divorce; and hence the smallest negligences should be promptly repaired, lest the delicacy of wedded love should be wounded, and so, being chilled, should soon die out.

Watch then, O Christian soul, over every little thing, for nothing so pleases one who loves as the evident desire to gratify him on all occasions; whilst, contrariwise, there can be nothing more terrible than that celebrated utterance of the Son of God: 'I would that thou wert cold or hot.' If you were one or the other, it might be possible to turn you towards good, and you would be capable of doing some work; but 'because thou art lukewarm,' and inefficacious, nothing can be done with you—and 'I will begin and vomit thee out of my mouth.'[1]

[1] Apoc. iii. 15, 16.

Sixteenth Day

We are not to swear: Christian simplicity.—
Matt. v. 33-37.

CONSIDER this passage one of the most touching in the whole of Christian teaching, because the Son of God here inculcates the most lovable of all virtues, which is sincerity. The Christian never lies. He says, 'That is, that is not'; and this word of his takes the place of all oaths. For instead of swearing either by heaven or by earth, or by the Holy City, or by his head —or in any manner whatever—he is ordered, for sole reply, to say, 'This is, or is not:—*yea* or *no*.' Falsehood can find no place in so simple a form of expression; it allows of no disguise, for it gives the affirmative or negative answer without subterfuge or equivocation. The sincerity of a Christian ought to be so perfect and so taken for granted that his bare word will be believed as if he had taken oaths of many kinds.

'That which is over and above these' (*i.e.*, above the simple 'yes' or 'no') 'is of evil.'[1] This is a very strong expression. Whatever we may say beyond simple affirmation or negation has been brought in by hardness of heart, malice, or trickery; in short, by the devil. Let us therefore return to primitive simplicity, and make ourselves so trustworthy by our sincerity that everyone will trust to our unsupported word.

Do not be so emphatic and positive:—do not exaggerate. 'Swear not' means, in part, that we must have that gentleness implied in the promise 'blessed are the meek.'[2] It would not be necessary to do more than simply affirm or deny if hearts were rightly disposed. Do you, for your own parts, remain in this guileless and gentle disposition; and if you must ever exceed simplicity in your speech, let it only be for the good of those who will not be moved without something stronger.

Renew yourselves; 'quit the old leaven.'[3] The wicked man is a liar, because it is to his interest to hide or disguise his doings. 'Put on the new man'—Jesus Christ—'who according to God is created in justice and holiness and

[1] Matt. v. 37. [2] *Ibid.* v. 5. [3] 1 Cor. v. 7.

truth.'[1] Thus, putting aside all lying, which becomes only the bad who would fain be concealed, 'speak ye the truth every man with his neighbour; for we are members one of another.'[2] The hand would not deceive the head that it was guiding through the darkness; the eye would not betray the foot, nor the foot hide its course from the eye. Could those members of our body speak and question each other, they would simply tell one another the truth in all things by *yes* or *no*. Try, O Christian people! to live thus. Do not play the mysterious and self-important personages. Be silent from reasons of prudence or moderation, and not for the sake of appearing wise and solemn. Let no dissimulation be found in you; and, above all, *do* nothing evil, or doubtful, or suspicious, so that you may have nothing to disguise. If you sin—for who does not?—and you have to discover your sin to a confessor, as you would a wound to your surgeon, say simply, 'It is so—it is not so,' without seeking vain excuses for your fault or long circumlocutions to wrap it up in. Humility will make you sincere, and if you keep to sincerity will infallibly cure you.

When we swear by the Name of God, and

[1] Ephes. iv. 24. [2] *Ibid.* 25.

call upon Him as witness, it is in order that our own word—weak in itself—should be made strong and inviolable by the intervention of the Sacred Name. But if we are filled with God, and clothed with Jesus Christ, the truth itself is in us; and our utterances, being strengthened by the merits of the very source whence they spring, need not to be supported by the sacredness of an oath.

There used to be people who thought that they were not swearing solemnly so long as they did not bring in the name of God:—that if they only asseverated by heaven, or earth, or the Holy City—and so forth—they were not taking a profane oath. But Jesus Christ here decides that in all this there is something which, as relating to God, should be held as more or less sacred, and should not be profaned by man's using it to swear by.

There is yet another remarkable saying on this point. 'Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.'[1] Of all the things we call our own, there is not one that we can really control—not even the colour of our hair. Never say, then, 'I swear by my head,'

[1] Matt. v. 36.

meaning 'I devote myself,' or, as we commonly have it, 'I offer my head to such and such a penalty'; because, far from having any power over your own head, you have none over even your hairs, to produce them, make them grow, or change their colour. Be therefore subject to God, and never speak as though you were able yourself to dispose of the smallest thing.

Seventeenth Day

Brotherly love: Extent of Christian Perfection.—Matt. v. 38-43.

OUR Lord here returns to that obligation of loving one another of which He has already said that, far from being at liberty to kill, or even to strike, we must not go so far as to get angry with our brother, nor show bitterness against him by insulting words; that if there had been any dispute we must be ready to make it up easily; and that, if possible, we should not employ a judge to settle quarrels, nor even a mediator to bring together hearts that were estranged. This is because we have a natural mediator who will work reconciliation between us:—Jesus Christ, and His grace and spirit of charity within our souls. We must, then, cultivate a conciliatory spirit, and each one be ready to come to an agreement with his brother of his own accord. Our Saviour said that if we suspected any irritation against us

in a brother's heart, we must anticipate him in trying to soothe it, and must prefer reconciliation to sacrifice.

Now He pushes the obligation yet further, so as to entirely eradicate the very spirit of revenge. 'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.'[1] This is what the old law allowed, and there appeared to be a kind of justice in it; but Jesus Christ will not allow the Christian to carry out such justice for himself, or even to seek it for his own satisfaction. If public justice puts down crimes of violence, the Christian does nothing to hinder it, and he respects public decrees; but, on his own account, if somebody strikes him on one cheek he will rather offer him the other than revenge himself;[2] and if a man takes his coat he will give him his cloak also, sooner than go to law for a slight thing, or give way to a carping or resentful spirit. He will rather, of his own accord, go two other miles with those who shall have forced him to go one than seek to do justice to himself, or dream of taking vengeance for any violence that may have been offered to him. Peace of heart is dearer to him than the possession of whatsoever things may have been unjustly snatched away; and as to failing in charity for

[1] Exod. xxi. 24. [2] Matt. v. 39, *seq.*

the sake of getting back anything he has been deprived of, he would not have it at the price. Oh, how pure and lovable is Christian and Evangelical doctrine; and how badly do Christians correspond with it—how little do they deserve their name!

'Give to him that asketh of thee; and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away,'[1] as people commonly do; but do what you can to comfort him: be liberal and beneficent. Not all the riches in the universe can ever equal the value of those two virtues, or the reward that they will get for us.

Here, then, we find three degrees of charity towards our enemies—to love them, to do them good, to pray for them. The first of these produces the second; if we love, we give. The last is commonly believed to be the easiest, but as a matter of fact it is the most difficult, because it has to be done purely for the sake of God; and nothing ought to be more sincere, hearty, or genuine than what we offer to Him Who sees even to the very depths of the heart.

[1] Matt. v. 42.

Eighteenth Day

Extent of Christian Perfection.—Matt. v. 46-48.

EXAMINE yourself on these three degrees:—to love, to do good, and to pray.

'If you love them that love you what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not also the heathens this?' Remember, that is, that you have not been offered an eternal inheritance, with indestructible happiness, for nothing: not that you may remain merely the equal—or, perhaps, the inferior—of the heathen. Let the Christian soul remind itself of this with regard to every point of conduct. What reward, O Christian woman, do you deserve for merely despising vain ornaments? The heathen have despised them. And what great glory will you have for despising riches? The philosophers did so. So also with chastity. It was heartily observed by the

Vestals:—the Pagans and the wise of this world have gloried in practising it. Raise your thoughts higher 'and be perfect.' But like whom? Like the philosophers? Like the heathen? No. Like the Jews? or like the Scribes and Pharisees, who were the most perfect amongst the Jews? No. Jesus Christ has told you that 'unless your justice surpasses theirs you shall have no part in the Kingdom of Heaven.'[1] You are to be perfect 'as also your heavenly Father is perfect.'[2] And because you can never equal Him, you are to grow constantly, that you may approach His perfection. The undertaking is great; but the help is equal to the labour. God, Who calls you up so high, reaches His hand to you; His Son, Who is equal to Him, comes down to you that He may carry you up. Say, then, with St Paul, *Courage, my soul!* 'I can do all things in him Who strengtheneth me.'[3]

Ah, when will you Christians who are so far from the true perfection of your state begin to conquer your indifference?

Let each one say to himself in his secret heart, '*Yes: I will learn to be a Christian.*' Stop short at these words: 'It was said to the ancients, and I say it to you.' Who gave us this new

[1] Matt. v. 20. [2] *Ibid.* v. 48. [3] Philip. iv. 13.

law? Christ, the Son of God in person, the eternal Light and Life, the Master sent from heaven to teach us; but also, and equally, the Saviour who comes to our help and Who, as we have just seen, measures His graces by the task He sets us to do. Let us therefore consider like St Paul 'if the word, spoken by angels, became steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward,' how *we* shall avoid it if we neglect so wholesome a doctrine as that taught by Jesus Christ; Who, having begun by explaining it to us Himself, 'was confirmed unto us by them that heard him. God also bearing them witness by signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and distributions of the Holy Ghost according to his own will.'[1]

And again, with the same saint:—'If a man making void the law of Moses'—which was but the pedagogue—'dieth without any mercy under two or three witnesses, how much more do you think he deserveth worse punishments who hath trodden under foot the Son of God; and hath esteemed the blood of the testament unclean, by which he was sanctified, and hath offered an affront to the spirit of grace? For

[1] Heb. ii. 2, 3, 4.

we know him that hath said, *Vengeance belongeth to me, and I will repay.* And again: *The Lord shall judge his people.* It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'[1]

[1] Heb. x. 28-31.

Nineteenth Day

Relapses.—Luke xi. 21, 26; Heb. vi. 4-9; 2 Pet. ii. 20-22.

TO strengthen ourselves against relapses we may dwell on what is said in St Luke about the 'strong man armed.'[1] 'The strong man armed' is the devil. Consider these words: 'what he possesses is in peace.' Think of the unhappy peace enjoyed by sinners. Conscience asleep, we see ourselves perishing, unmoved and in cold blood; the pleasures of sense bewitch us, and the devil reigns tranquilly in our souls. When Jesus Christ rouses the hardened heart and we do penance, the 'strong man' is driven away; but he has not done with us, and will not give up his possession. He returns with seven devils worse than himself. Weigh well what then follows. These impure spirits sully afresh the dwelling purged by penance, and there establish

[1] Luke xi. 21, *seq.*

their home:—'and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.' Now, if after each relapse our state becomes worse, if the devil's yoke grows heavier, if we plunge deeper and deeper into evil, and our strength incessantly diminishes, where shall we be at last, and how come forth from the abyss? God can draw us out:—that we know; but if there is nothing to be despaired of, there is everything to be feared.

It is impossible to man, in the ordinary course of things, to save himself from such a state. God alone can do it by an effort—so to speak—of His omnipotence. 'It is impossible,' St Paul says, 'for those who were once illuminated, having tasted also the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost . . . . and are fallen away, to be renewed again to penance.'[1] If St Paul speaks thus of those who have profaned the sanctity of Baptism, what should not those fear who have added to this the profanation of the Sacrament of Penance, so often repeated and so often despised? 'The earth that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it . . . . but which bringeth forth thorns and briars, is reprobate, and very near unto a curse, whose end is to be burnt.'[2]

[1] Heb. vi. 4, *seq.* [2] *Ibid.* vi. 7. 8.

There is nothing here that needs to be explained. The words are clear enough, and we have only to reflect on them attentively, one after the other.

When we have been filled with fear by these words, we may arouse hope within us by the following ones, remembering that the whole Church tells us with St Paul: 'We hope for better things from *you*.'[1]

Then, having heard St Paul, we may listen to St Peter:—'For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them. For that of the true proverb has happened to them: the dog is returned to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.'[2]

Merely to hear such expressions horrifies and even sickens us; but the thing itself is much more horrible; and animals in the condition described are not nearly so degraded as the penitent who has fallen away again.

[1] Heb. vi. 9. [2] 2 Peter ii. 21, 22.

Twentieth Day

Vain-glory in good works.—Matt. vi. 1-4.

AFTER having brought Christian justice to the point we have just seen—even so far as to give us God's own perfection for our model—our Lord remembers that man, always inclined to vanity, would like to draw glory from the external practices of such great holiness; and this thought gives rise to the following precept:—'Take heed that you do not your justice before men to be seen by them.' He does not forbid our practising Christian justice on all occasions that we may edify our neighbour; on the contrary, He has already said, 'So let your light shine before men that . . . they may glorify your Father Who is in Heaven'[1] in your good works:—but, 'take care not to do them *in order to* be seen of men, or you will lose your reward.' That is, if you act

[1] Matt. v. 16.

for men, then ask them for the reward; but expect from God only the punishment reserved for hypocrites.

Every time you are praised, dread this saying of our Lord's: 'Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.'[1] A saying of such importance that Jesus Christ repeats it with reference to each action that He specially marks out in this chapter.

Remember what He said to the bad rich man —'Thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime.'[2] And elsewhere, in the parable of the Feast, 'Lest perhaps . . . a recompense be made to thee.'

Happy, then, are they whose lives are 'hid with Christ in God,'[3] as St Paul has it: they whom the world knows not—who live in secret before God—who are content with His sight of them: for can there be greater folly or error than *not* to be satisfied with such an onlooker? They are 'as unknown' says the same Apostle:—because their doings are not in the foolish talk of men:—but they are 'yet known.'[4] God esteems them all the more because nobody thinks of them and they are as nothing on

[1] Matt. vi. 2. [2] Luke xvi. 25.
[3] Coloss. iii. 3. [4] 2 Cor. vi. 8.

earth. Happy—yes, happy indeed—are such souls! 'If I yet pleased men,' says St Paul, again, 'I should not be the servant of Christ.'[1]

Nevertheless, we must be on our guard here against a certain kind of indifference, which may make us neglect outward actions that would edify our neighbour. People are apt to say, 'What does it matter to me what they think?'; but this is really like saying, 'What does it matter to me if I give scandal?' God forbid! We are bound, in all our external acts, to edify others, and to regulate every jot and tittle of what we do; but this must come about simply and naturally, and the *glory* of it must be given to God.

Again, we must take care not to be satisfied with merely a well-ordered exterior. We must furnish forth the spectacle that God demands—that is, a heart that is seeking Him in its hidden depths.

'Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.'[2] Hide your alms from even your most intimate friends. 'Shut up alms in the heart of the poor,'[3] says the wise man. Let even the poor themselves, if possible, not know you. Indeed, if you could, you should hide

[1] Gal. i. 10. [2] Matt. vi. 3, 4. [3] Eccles. xix. 15.

what good you do even from yourself; at least, conceal its merit from your own sight. Always believe that you are doing little or nothing, and that you are a useless servant. Fear, in all your good works, that your intention is not pure enough, nor sufficiently free from worldly motives. Let God alone see the merit of your actions; do good without reflecting on yourself. Be occupied solely with the *work*, so as never to think about what you may gain by it, but to leave all to the judgment of God. Thus, He alone will gaze upon you, and you will be hidden from your own sight.

'Sound not a trumpet before thee,'[1] like those who are incessantly talking of their own savings and doings. They are their own trumpeters, being so much afraid that they may escape notice.

[1] Matt. vi. 2.

Twenty-first Day

Prayer, and the presence of God in secret.—Matt. vi. 5-8.

'ENTER into thy chamber'— that is, into the very innermost part of your house; but also into the innermost part of your heart. Be perfectly collected. 'Shut the door upon you'— that is, close up the avenues of sense, and give access to no irrelevant thought. 'Pray in secret'—that is, pour out your soul before God alone; make Him only the depositary of your hidden griefs.

'Speak not much.' This pouring forth does not imply telling God your secret needs by means of long speeches. 'He knows all before you ask Him.' Say inwardly whatever may be of use by helping to move you and to fix your thoughts on God. The prayers of the Pagans, who knew not God, were nothing but a superfluity of unmeaning words. Speak little with the lips and much with the heart. Neither should you

multiply even your thoughts, for this is the way to become absent or distracted. Fix your mind on some important truth which may have specially laid hold of your intellect and heart. Consider — weigh — enjoy — reflect — rejoice. You must not, if I may say so, swallow down every morsel directly; it is not well to be constantly passing from one thought or one truth to another. Lay hold of *one thing:* grasp it till you have assimilated it; fasten your heart rather than your intellect upon it; crush out from it, so to speak, all its sap, by dint of bringing the full pressure of your attention to bear upon it.

'God sees you in secret.' Think how He sees you through and through, infinitely more clearly than you see yourself. Make a simple and lively act of faith in His presence. Place yourself wholly, O Christian soul, beneath His gaze. He is present within you, for He gives existence and movement to all things. But do not stop short at this presence itself, which is equally true of all creatures, animate and inanimate. Believe, with active faith, that God is present with you inwardly, as giving you all good thoughts and as holding in His hand the very source whence these flow; and not merely good *thoughts*, but good desires, good resolu-

tions, and all kinds of good intentions, from the first moment of their birth up to their final perfection. See Him again, as present in all the just, making His dwelling with them, according to our Lord's word: 'We will come to him and make our abode with him.' He is within them in a firm and enduring form, living established there. Wish that He may be with you in this manner; offer Him your whole interior being, that He may dwell there and make it into His own temple.

Sometimes, again, go forth from yourself, and, with the same faith that shows Him present in your own soul, behold Him in Heaven, where He manifests Himself to His beloved ones. There it is that He expects you. Run—fly—tear your bonds asunder—break away from all attachments that bind you to flesh and blood! Oh, my God, when shall I see Thee? When shall I have that 'clean heart' that makes one 'see God' within oneself, outside oneself—everywhere? O light that enlightenest all things! O life that makest all things to live! O truth on which all may feed! O good that satisfiest all! O love that unitest all things in one! I praise thee, O my heavenly Father, Who seest me in secret.

Twenty-second Day

The Lord's Prayer: Our Father.—Matt. vi. 9.

LET an act of love be seen in each petition.

'Our Father.' At the first word of the Lord's Prayer our heart melts with love. God chooses to be our Father by a special adoption. He has an only Son Who is equal to Him, and in Whom He is well pleased, but He adopts sinners. Men adopt children only when they have none of their own; God, Who had such a Son as this, nevertheless adopts us. Adoption is an effect of love, for we choose whom we will adopt; Nature bestows other children, but love alone makes adopted ones. God, Who loves His only begotten Son with the whole of His love, and to infinity, extends to us the love He bears to Him. Jesus Christ tells us this in that marvellous prayer that He made for us to His Father: 'That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and

I in them.[1] Let us, then, love such a Father. Let us say over and over again, *Our Father, Our Father, Our Father!* Shall we never love you? Shall we never be like true children, pierced to the heart by your fatherly tenderness?

Yet again, 'Our Father.' Why do we say *our Father?* Let us learn of St Paul. 'Because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.'[2] It is the Holy Spirit, then, Who is in us; from Him proceeds that inward cry of the heart by which we call upon God, as upon a Father always ready to hear.

The same Apostle says elsewhere:—'For whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' For God gives us 'the spirit of adoption whereby we cry: Abba, Father!'[3] Here, again, it is clear that the Holy Ghost teaches us this filial cry with which we have recourse to God as to our Father.

Why call it a cry? Because a great need causes us to cry out. A child cries only when it is in pain or want; but for whom should it then cry but for father, mother, or nurse—for anyone, in short, who stands to it in a parental relation?

[1] John xvii. 26. [2] Gal. iv. 6. [3] Rom. viii. 14, 15.

Let us then cry out, for our needs are extreme: we are faltering—sin is gaining upon us—the joys of sense are carrying us away with them. Let us cry out, by all means, for we can do no less; but let it be to our Father. And let us not forget that what impels us to cry is the Holy Ghost, the God of love:—the Love itself of the Father and the Son, 'who pours forth the charity of God in our hearts;' and that therefore we may call out, with all the fervour of our very innermost being, '*O God, Thou art our Father!*'

'Abraham,' and the other Patriarchs from whom we spring according to the flesh, 'have ignored us, and Israel has not known us.' But Thou, O God, our true parent, dost know us; and Thou dost Thyself send us, even from Thy own bosom, that Holy Spirit by whom we call upon Thee as Thy children.

St Paul says further that 'the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God.'[1] But who shall understand that Spirit, which testifies to us only when the conscience is at peace, and the heart has nought to reproach itself with that should keep it from God? Who shall hear that voice which whispers to us, in the inmost, silent recesses of the heart,

[1] Rom. viii. 16.

'God is your Father: you are His child?' Let us pass on: that voice is too sacred—too few people can hear it. Let us pass on: another time we may understand better—when we are more fully confirmed, more deeply rooted, in goodness. The Holy Ghost does not give this secret testimony to everyone. He would fain do so, on His own part, but all are not worthy. It is well for us to beg that we may receive it, and to pray 'O God, make us worthy!'; but He makes answer: 'act with me—do your own share of labour—open your hearts to me—silence all creatures, and often say to me in secret: *our Father, our Father!*'

Twenty-third Day

'*Our Father, Who art in Heaven.*'—Matt. vi. 9.

YET again 'Our Father'; but this time we must add 'Who art in heaven.' Thou art everywhere; but specially Thou art in heaven as in the place where Thou gatherest together Thy children, where Thou showest them Thyself and Thy glory, and where Thou hast appointed them their inheritance.

St Paul, when he had told us how the Spirit gives testimony that we are children of God, added, 'and if sons, heirs also': and even this is not all:—it is difficult to realise the full measure of our happiness, for we are 'heirs, indeed, of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.'[1] We shall have the same inheritance—the same kingdom. We shall be seated on Christ's own throne; we shall share in His glory, and shall be happy in Him, through Him, and with Him.

[1] Rom. viii. 17.

Hence we cry: 'Our Father *Who art in heaven*,' that we may remember where He calls us.

Who could fail to love Him Who makes us not only His heirs, but co-heirs with His beloved Son? And who could fail to desire that lovely inheritance? It is given only to those who love Him. Our inheritance is God Himself: He is our one good and our sole reward. 'I,' He said, 'am thy protector, and thy reward exceeding great'[1]:—too great, that is, for your deserts, but not exceeding the immense goodness of your God.

[1] Gen. xv. 1.

Twenty-fourth Day

'*Hallowed be Thy Name.*'—Matt. vi. 9, 10.

'HALLOWED be Thy Name; Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' All this is a continuous act of love. To sanctify the name of God means to glorify Him in all things, and to long for nothing but His glory. To desire His kingdom means to wish with one's whole heart to be subject to Him in all things, and to have Him reign not only over us, but over all creatures. His kingdom is in heaven; and His supremacy will be declared over the whole earth at the Last Judgment. What we have to do, therefore, is to put ourselves into the right state for desiring that glorious day. Would that we might all be of the number to whom Christ says 'When these things begin to come to pass'—that is, when the signs that herald the Last Judgment shall appear, and that great day shall approach—whilst the rest of

mankind are shuddering with fear, 'look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand.'[1]

But Jesus Christ comes to each of us when our life ends. When that 'Last Day' of our own, then, is near, and Our Lord knocks at our door to call us, we must be ready to receive Him with joy and to say 'Thy Kingdom come! for I desire that all there is in me which is mortal may be swallowed up by life.'[2]

But who amongst us really longs for the full reign of God? Which of us says 'Thy Kingdom come' really heartily? And yet it is for this that we are prepared by the petition to Our Father *in heaven*. That is our habitation and our home, because it is our Father's.

We are, in fact, not in good faith when we say 'Thy kingdom come':—or rather, which is the same thing at bottom, 'May Thy kingdom come *for us*.' And what stifles this desire, which ought to be so natural to every Christian, is our love of this world and its pleasures. We love our life here, full as it is of every kind of evil; and, still worse, full as it is of sin, which is the greatest of all evils.

Let us, then, break these bonds and say, 'Thy

[1] Luke xxi. 28. [2] 2 Cor. v. 4.

will be done!' Here is the true and perfect act of love:—to conform our will to the will of God. In heaven, where our Father is, they love Him; and therefore it is that they find their happiness in His will. May that which is done in heaven be done on earth! May what is finished up there be begun down here!

St Augustine says that this life ought not to be loved, but endured: *non amanda, sed toleranda*. It is only a place of pilgrimage—of exile—of sighs and tears. Therefore, O Heavenly Father, let Thy kingdom come and Thy will be done!

Twenty-fifth Day

'*Give us this day our daily bread.*'—Matt. vi. 11.

'GIVE us this day our daily bread!' Here we have the genuine words of a child who confidently expects his Father to supply all his wants, even to the very smallest. O Father of us all, Thou hast given us a body which is mortal, though Thou didst not make it so at first:—but we disobeyed, and so death became our portion. This weak and mortal body, then, needs food every day, or it will grow faint and perish. Give it to us! Give it of simple kind, and in what quantity is necessary. Let us learn to remember, as we beg for it, that it is Thou Who dost supply it from day to day. Thou givest their daily bread to Thy children, Thy servants, and Thy soldiers, if they are fighting under Thy standard. Let us ask it with confidence, and take it from Thy hand with grateful thanks!

It is rare for those who serve Thee to want for bread. True — Thou wilt often refuse what would gratify greediness or ill-regulated appetites, because these are bad, and it is more worthy of Thee to restrain than to gratify them; but as to the necessaries of life, hardly ever dost Thou refuse them to such as fear Thee and ask with humility. Thou hast charged the rich with the support of the poor; and hast placed so high a value on almsgiving that it can never cease to flourish in Thy Church. But even shouldst Thou, our Father, see well to let us want for bread, or for any other necessary of life, what should we say? We must simply go back to the previous petition :— 'Thy will be done':—for 'My meat,' said Our Lord, is 'to do the will of him that sent me.'[1]

Another version reads 'Give us our super-substantial bread,' by which we understand the Bread of the Holy Eucharist. O my God, give us this to-day and every day. Were we only worthy to communicate every time we are present at the Holy Sacrifice! The table is prepared, but the guests are wanting: yet, O Jesus, Thou callest them to come! Let us

[1] John iv. 34.

desire this Bread of Life fervently and eagerly. Those who 'hunger and thirst for justice' desire it; and the most perfect act of love is to long incessantly to receive Jesus Christ.

Twenty-sixth Day

'*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.*'—Matt. vi. 12, 14, 15.

'FORGIVE us *as we forgive*.' God has admirably made the pardon that we ourselves expect from Him depend upon that which we are commanded to grant to all who have offended us. Not satisfied with continually laying down the rule of our obligation in this matter, He puts the utterance of it into our own mouths in our daily prayer, so that if we fail in forgiveness He may say to us, as He did to the servant in the parable:—'Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant.'[1]

That is: 'You beg my forgiveness on condition of forgiving others yourself: you pronounced your own sentence when you refused to pardon your brother. Depart to that un-

[1] Luke xix. 22.

happy place where neither pardon nor mercy is found!'

This is what Christ insists upon here; and He explains it still more terribly in the parable of the unjust steward.

Twenty-seventh Day

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.—Matt. vi. 13.

WE do not say 'Lead us not into temptation' merely to escape yielding to the temptation, but to prevent its coming to us, according to the injunction: 'Watch and pray lest ye *enter into* temptation.'[1] We must fear the 'entering in,' as well as the falling.

These words set forth the necessity for praying at all times:—both when need is actually pressing, and before it presses. Never wait for the temptation to come, for then trouble and anxiety of mind will hinder your praying properly. Pray before the temptation, and so forestall the enemy. God 'tempteth no man,'[2] says St James. Hence, when we say '*lead us* not into temptation' we must clearly understand it to mean 'Do not let *us enter* into it.' This is

[1] Matt. xxvi. 41. [2] James i. 13.

what St Paul says :—'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able'[1] :—but our ability lies chiefly in our prayers.

'Deliver us from evil.' The Church expands this into 'deliver us from all evil : past, present, and to come.' 'Past evil,' which still leaves bad effects, is sin already committed ; 'present evil' is sin that we may be now committing ; and 'evil to come' is sin that we fear we shall commit. All other evils are nothing, except in so far as they may cause us to sin by murmuring and impatience. It is principally in view of this possibility that we ask to be delivered from any other misfortunes.

'Deliver us from evil' :—Deliver us from sin, and the consequences of sin :—therefore, from disease, sorrow, and death, so that we may be perfectly free. Then indeed shall we be supremely happy !

Another version has : 'Deliver us from *the evil one*' : that is, from our enemy the devil with all his temptations.

When we beg for strength against temptation, it is not only against the devil, but against ourselves as well, according to St James. 'But

[1] 1 Cor. x. 13.

everyone is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured.'[1] This is the one great temptation; and the devil himself can only reach us by means of it. How extreme, forsooth, is our weakness, when we are our own greatest enemies! And yet we sleep, and fear not! We neglect our salvation, and never realise the need for prayer!

[1] James i. 14.

Twenty-eighth Day

Of Fasting.—Matt. vi. 16-18.

ESUS CHRIST here joins the doctrine of fasting to that of prayer and almsgiving. These are three sacrifices that go together, as we find in a verse of the Book of Tobias :—*Prayer is good with fasting and alms.*[1] By alms, we sacrifice our possessions ; by fasting, we make our bodies into victims ; by prayer, we offer to God our affections :—we may say, the purest incense of His own Spirit.

What is said here of fasting is like what has been said of prayer and alms :—that we must do it for God alone, and in His sight, without any thought of man. If, however, one has disedified the Church by neglecting due observance, it is right to give edification, unaffectedly, by repairing the neglect with stricter outward conduct. But this needs great precaution ;

[1] Tobias xii. 8.

and, in doing it, we must avoid ostentation as the curse of good works.

By 'fasting' must here be understood all other austerities that are used to mortify the body. They must be carefully hidden. 'Be not, like the hypocrites, sad.' 'Anoint thy head and wash thy face.' That is, we are to show meekness and joy to everyone; we are not to be like people who bear austerities impatiently, and who seem, by treating all those they come across harshly and irritably, as if they laid the blame of their sufferings on them. Austerity to ourselves ought to make us gentler and more docile:—to correct, and not to increase, bad temper. This is the meaning of 'anointing the head and washing the face': they are acts typical of meekness and joy.

Twenty-ninth Day

The treasure in heaven: The single eye: The impossibility of serving two masters.—Matt. vi. 19, 20, 24.

HERE our Lord tears up avarice by the roots and prevents our ever fearing poverty. To 'have our treasure in heaven' is to place all our hopes and affections there; and, again, to send our riches to be stored up there by the hands of the poor and needy.

'Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.' This is a grand saying. Consider well what your thoughts are full of, for wherever they naturally turn is the real place of your treasure, and the home of your heart. If your thoughts are filled with God, then are you happy. If with anything merely mortal, which 'the rust and the moth' constantly consume, and corruption lays hold of, then will your treasure escape you, and your heart remain empty and destitute.

The 'single eye' means purity of intention. The eye is single when the intention is upright; and the intention is upright when the heart is undivided. This is what we mean by *simplicity* and *straightforwardness*. The 'intention' is the eye of the soul. We cannot look fixedly at more than one object; and the soul can seize upon only a single good. Uncertain and wandering glances see everything and nothing at the same time; and, in like manner, when the soul squanders itself in vague longings it knows not what it wants, and sinks into indifference. God demands a fixed and determined gaze.

This is confirmed by the words that follow: 'No man can serve two masters'—or love two things at once. When we know not what we love, and divide our affections between God and the creature, then God refuses the share that we offer Him, and the creature keeps all. We must, therefore, be decided and vigorous in following the path of devotion.

A good intention sanctifies every act of the soul, just as a direct look guides and secures our bodily steps. We ought to renew such an intention often in every day, and continually beg God to strengthen it. We need to be

always pulling ourselves up, if we would have a 'single eye' in all things.

'You cannot serve God and Mammon.' According to St Paul 'covetousness . . . is the service of idols;'[1] and those who love good cheer make 'a God of their belly.'[2] We make gods for ourselves out of all the objects we love. Every vicious attachment is idolatry:—and who would willingly serve an idol, and transfer the glory due to God to a false divinity? The very thought horrifies one; and yet it is what everybody, who loves anything *more* than God, does. His thoughts, his affections, the purest incense of his heart—his whole worship—goes to that thing, whatever it may be. What misery! Is it really possible that a rational being, possessing the power of offering himself, can make the sacrifice to any object except God?

Uproot, then, from your hearts, avarice, ambition, love of sensuous pleasure—all creature-loves; for they are so many idols that you have erected within you. It is not enough for the creature not to have your whole heart:—it must not really possess the least portion of it. Give all to God:—dive to the bottom, and empty out your whole heart to Him! He will know

[1] Coloss. iii. 5. [2] Philip. iii. 19.

how to take up His abode in it, and to fill it.

To fill oneself with the creature is to fill oneself with such viands as load and satiate, without nourishing ; and after feeding on which one straightway hungers again, because they contain no substance that can assimilate with one's own. What terrible emptiness must follow on such fulness !

Thirtieth Day

On having no anxiety about this life, but trusting in Providence.—Matt. vi. 25, 26, *seq.*

'BE not solicitous.' This injunction does not forbid reasonable forethought, nor well-regulated work; but only anxiety and worry of mind.

'The life is more than the food, and the body more than the raiment.' God, Who gave you life, and Who formed your body before you were able to take care of it, will not fail to give you the rest. He who has done the greater will not disdain to do the less.

'Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.' Happy were these little animals—happy the flowers—a thousand times happy every one of these small creatures—could they but know their own happiness in being objects of God's Fatherly care and receiving all things straight from His hands!

Sin has subjected *us* to innumerable hard labours: but we must not carry these to the point of getting over-anxious. We must work, certainly; this is the penalty that God Himself has imposed for sin; but let us work in the spirit of penance, and leave the fruit of our toil to God. 'O men of little faith! . . . Your Father knoweth that you have need of these things.' Do you doubt that He knows what you need? He made you: He has promised to see to your wants: do you doubt His will to do it? He Who has forestalled you in all things:—Who gave you your being, which He had *not* promised to you:—is not likely to refuse you what He promised even before you existed! 'Be not,' then, 'solicitous.'

See how you grow; how your body nourishes itself. Can you add one cubit to your stature? God has been causing you to grow in your sleep, and has made you develop from an infant into a man. Believe, then, that He will do everything else necessary for your body: lean on His power and His goodness.

To the words 'be not solicitous' which St Matthew has recorded, St Luke adds: 'and be not lifted up on high'[1]:—as if in danger of falling,

[1] Luke xii. 29.

and always quaking with fear; for this is the result of over-anxiety. Let your state be, always, not that of a man hanging in the air, but of one firmly supported by Divine Providence.

Thirty-first Day

We are not to be like the heathen.—Matt. vi. 32.

'FOR after all these things do the heathens seek.' Observe how constantly Our Lord requires us to rise above the vices—and even above the virtues—of the heathen. Just before this, He had said: 'Do not even the publicans do the same?'[1] Let us consider well wherein we surpass them. Jesus Christ did not say without reason that 'the men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it.'[2] Of what use to us is Christianity, if we lead heathen lives? Yet, alas! how much paganism there is amongst the faithful:—how many Christians living as though they knew not God! There exists, in fact, no God for them. Where shall we find tears enough wherewith to mourn our blindness?

[1] Matt. v. 46, 47. [2] *Ibid.* xii. 41.

Thirty-second Day

Of seeking God and His justice, and in what manner.—Matt. vi. 33, 34.

'SEEK ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.' Observe:—we are to seek the Kingdom of God and *His* justice; not a merely moral justice, after the fashion of the heathen; but Christian justice, founded on the example of Jesus Christ, and on these rules of the Gospel that we have just considered. This is a justice that will make us live differently to those who know not God, and also to those who lived before the coming of Christ:—a justice suited to our calling, to our state, and to the graces we have received:—for these are what is meant by the Kingdom of God and His justice.

'*Seek*': In all the other things that He has spoken of, Our Lord has not used the word 'seek'; for He assumes that God, in His good-

ness, can give us all things, and does so, without our troubling about them. This frequently comes to pass as regards the goods of this world; but for the Kingdom of God we are to search. 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling,' as St Paul says:—this is the only thing worthy of solicitude.

But I venture to say that, even here, you should banish too great care, or uneasiness in seeking; because St Paul further says: 'For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to his good will.' Tremble, then, in working out your salvation; and yet mistrust not your strength too far, for God works with you: He Himself does with you everything you do. Rely, then, on His succour: throw yourself into His arms. He is good: He will take pity on your weakness: He will 'work in you, according to His good will,' that which you also must work in yourself. Yes:—work out your salvation: labour over it with care, and even with fear; but at the same time with a kind of repose, as of one who looks for every help from an all-powerful and good God.

'Be not therefore solicitous for to-morrow; for the morrow will be solicitous for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.' This

precept, most important for all the affairs of life, is especially so in the affair of our salvation. There are people who will torment themselves, and think 'Yes: this is all very well! I have been to confession, and have *begun* to be converted: but what trouble, temptation, and weariness are yet to come! I shall never be able to resist them; life is long, and I shall inevitably give way before such labours.'

Go forth, my son—or my daughter! overcome to-day's difficulties, and do not trouble yourself about to-morrow's. One after the other you will conquer them all. 'Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.' He who has helped you to-day will not desert you to-morrow: but too much forethought and anxiety may be your destruction.

Thirty-third Day

OF AVARICE AND RICHES AGAIN.

We are not to put confidence in possessions.—
Luke xii. 15, 16, *seq.*

LET us add to the foregoing what St Luke says:—'Take heed and beware of all covetousness.' Uproot so great an evil to the last fibre: suffer not even the least feeling of such a kind to remain within you.

However rich you may be, something will always be wanting to you—either of happiness, or of health, or of good fortune, or of greatness. Rejoice in this deficiency: accept with gladness and consolation this portion of poverty that has fallen to your lot. Love it, as a mark of Christianity and an imitation of Christ. Love your need and your nakedness. If you are a Religious, renounce all spirit of ownership; and rejoice in the Lord that you not only possess

nothing, but are incapable by your very condition of possessing anything.

'—for a man's life doth not consist in the abundance of things that he possesseth.' In vain do you say *I have enough to live upon:* you will live none the longer because of it. And in vain may you think *I have nothing to fear—I possess all things in abundance:*—'Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee.' Take note how death is here explained: 'thy soul is *required*.' It is not your own: your very life is only lent to you: an account of it will be demanded. And when? 'This night.' You will be found to-morrow morning dead in your bed; and all these goods that you have been boasting of will not have helped you in the least, or have lengthened your life by a single second.

'What shall I do?' asks this rich man, in the midst of his abundance. Yes: here is the chief effect of great riches:—care and uneasiness. *What shall I do with them? Where put them? How protect them?* 'I will pull down my barns and will build greater . . . and I will say to my soul: "Soul . . . take thy rest. Eat, drink and make good cheer."' That is, 'refuse nothing to the senses, and repose on the thought of your

abundance.' And whilst you are taking your ease, with the sense of security bred by riches, they will snatch from you—not the riches themselves—but that very soul that you were inviting to enjoy them! 'And whose,' then, 'shall those things be that thou hast provided?'

'So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, but is not rich towards God:'—who does not, in short, find his sole treasure in Him. Such is his destiny—such his condition—such the end of his life:—to this alone do all his riches tend.

And now, after all these reflections, go back to the very words used by the Son of God Himself: read them over and over; ponder them yet again: you will find them infinitely more powerful in themselves than all that may be said or thought about them to help you in realising their force.

Thirty-fourth Day

What God does for the generality of plants and animals: We are to count ourselves as His favourite flock.—Luke xii. 22, 24, 29, *seq.*

'THEREFORE I say to you, Be not solicitous for your life . . . consider the ravens, for they do not sow.'

In St Matthew 'the birds of the air,'[1] in general, are spoken of. In St Luke, we are told of the raven:—one of the most voracious of animals, and yet without storehouse or provision; finding enough to feed upon though it neither sows nor digs. God supplies all that is needful:—'Who giveth to the beasts their food: and to the young ravens that call upon him,' says the Psalmist.[2] He hears their cry, though a hoarse and unpleasant one; and feeds them just as amply as He does the nightingale, or any bird with a softer and sweeter voice.

[1] Matt. vi. 26. [2] Ps. cxlvi. 9.

In this wonderful sermon, Our Lord teaches us to consider the whole range of nature :—the flowers, the birds, the animals, our own body, our soul, our imperceptible growth :—so that we may use it all to raise our thoughts to God. He would have us use natural things in a higher way than we are inclined to do, and with a more penetrating eye, as the Image of God. The heavens are His throne ; the earth is His foot-stool ; the capital of a kingdom is the seat of His Empire ; the sun rises and the rain falls to assure us of His goodness. Everything speaks of Him : He has not left Himself without witness.

We have already noticed how Our Lord uses the saying in St Luke, 'Be not lifted up on high,' to express anxiety, as representing the state of one who knows not on what or whom he may lean, and who constantly dreads a fall ; and we have seen how we must avoid such a terrible state of fearfulness by firm faith in God's support.

But of all the sayings peculiar to St Luke, in this sermon preached by the Son of God, the one that most inspires us with courage in our weakness and misery is this :—'Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your father to give you a kingdom.' In all that comes before, we are taught not to fear that we shall be left to starve,

since God will see to this; and that His ordinary course is never to let those who trust in Him want for anything. But here He leads us higher. For, after all, if you should come to need bread, what then? You would still have 'a kingdom.' And what Kingdom? God's own. 'Fear not, little flock, for God will give you *His* Kingdom.' That is, not one intended for the great of this world, but a kingdom meant for the poor and humble:—for that little flock that the world counts as nothing, but on which the Father looks down:—which, in fact, seems to be actually nothing in comparison with the enormous multitude, and the brilliant appearance, of the wicked. Yet it is for the sake of this 'little flock' that God preserves the rest of the world.

What do you fear, then? That you will die of hunger? How many martyrs have died of it in prison! Yet, not only was such a death no hindrance to their gaining the crown of martyrdom, but it actually won them their crown. Fear nothing, then, little flock! but 'sell what you possess, and give alms. Make to yourselves . . . a treasure in heaven which faileth not; where the thief approacheth not, nor the moth corrupteth':—the treasure, that is, of good deeds.

Thirty-fifth Day

The same subject: of shunning all avarice.—
Luke xii. 15, 21.

IT is impossible to meditate too much on Our Lord's admirable instruction to us, to 'take heed and beware of all covetousness.' There are several kinds of avarice. One is of a sour and sordid description, which amasses wealth unceasingly, but never touches it for enjoyment. Of this kind, the Wise Man says: 'and what doth it profit the owner, but that he seeth the riches with his eyes?' [1]

But there is another sort of avarice, far more cheerful and liberal, which—like the former—desires to amass perpetually, but with the object of enjoyment and satisfaction. This was the avarice of the man depicted to us in this Gospel.

A covetous man of this latter kind feels great contempt for the miser who denies himself

[1] Eccles. v. 9, 10.

everything in the midst of abundance. He fancies himself far wiser, because he is enjoying his possessions: yet God calls him 'thou fool.'

In fact, one is a fool through too much saving, and through imagining that riches which he does not use can make him happy; and the other is equally a fool for his over-indulgence, and for believing himself secure in the ownership of goods that he may be deprived of any night. 'Take heed' therefore 'and beware' of every kind of covetousness:—alike of the spendthrift's and the miser's. Be 'rich towards God': make your sole treasure of Him and His goodness; for, where *this* Treasure is concerned, we may enjoy freely. It will never diminish by spending, because the more it is used the larger it grows.

Thirty-sixth Day

'*Judge not.*'—Matt. vii. 1, 2, *seq.*

'JUDGE not.' There is a judge above you; a judge Who will try your judgments, and demand an account of them; who, by a just sentence, will punish you for having passed sentence on others without authority and without knowledge:—the two greatest defects that a judgment can have.

(1.) *Without authority:*—'who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth'[1]:—it is for the master only to judge.

Judge not, then, him whose judge you are not.

And what St Paul adds to this should serve yet more to close your mouth, O rash judge! You pronounce on the state of another man's servant, and say that he has either fallen or is

[1] Rom. xiv. 4.

about to fall; but 'he shall stand,' says the Apostle, 'for God is able to make him stand.' Do not you, then, declare that he will fall.

St Paul goes on:—'But why dost thou judge thy brother?' And why do you despise your brother? He is your fellow-man, and your equal; and it does not belong to you to judge him. You are both alike answerable to the judge before whom both must appear. 'For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. . . . So then every one of us shall render an account of himself to God.' [1] Do not dream, therefore, of judging others, but think of the account that you will have to give of yourself.

St James is no less decided. 'There is,' he says, 'one law-giver, and judge, who is able to destroy and to deliver.' [2] And to this he adds, 'But what art thou, who judgest thy neighbour?' which reflection he deduces from the grand principle previously laid down:—'He that detracteth his brother, or judgeth his brother, detracteth the law, and judgeth the law':—namely, because the law itself has forbidden you to usurp the power of judgment. 'But,' continues this great apostle,

[1] Rom. xiv. 10, 12. [2] James iv. 12.

'if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.'[1] You put yourself above your own rule of conduct; and the law will come down upon your head before long with its full weight, and will crush you. See what strength, light, and truth are opposed, by these two verses of the Apostle, to your rash judgments!

(2.) It is clear then, that you judge your neighbour without authority to do so. But you also judge without *knowledge*.

You do not know the man you judge; you cannot see his interior; you do not understand his motive, which may perhaps justify him; and even if his crime is a public one, you do not know that he may not repent:—or even that he has not already repented, and become one of those over whom the angels rejoice. Therefore, '*judge not*.'

'Charity is patient, is kind. Charity envieth not, is not puffed up. . . . Is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil. . . . Beareth all things, believeth all things; hopeth all things, endureth all things.'[2] We know also that she 'rejoiceth not' in the iniquity of others, but that she does rejoice when all do good 'in the truth.'

[1] James iv. 12. [2] Cor. xiii. 4-7.

Hence, charity takes no pleasure in judging; and this all the more, because in judging others she would condemn herself. Wherefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest. For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou dost the same things which thou judgest.'[1] You are, that is, judged out of your own mouth, O wicked servant! and have pronounced your own sentence.

What joy for a criminal to hear from the very mouth of his judge: 'You shall not be judged!' But this can only be if he has himself judged no one.

[1] Rom. ii. 1.

Thirty-seventh Day

On seeing the smallest faults of others, and being blind to our own greatest ones.—Matt. vii. 3-5.

JESUS CHRIST here sets forth another reason for not judging :—that our own offence may be greater than the one we condemn. 'And why seest thou a mote in thy brother's eye, and seest not a beam in thy own eye?'

Thou hypocrite! The worst sort of hypocrisy is to be always condemning others. A man, in doing this, plays the virtuous himself :—he wants to have the strictness of his own morals, and the purity of his own principles, admired :—he would fain be considered an incorruptible character, who is above flattery and spares nobody ; but—hypocrite as he really is—he never dreams of correcting himself. He dilates perpetually on the smallest defects of his neighbours, and never even suspects the enormity of those vices of which he is himself guilty. There are no such men on earth for being indulgent to themselves as these pitiless censors of other people's lives.

Thirty-eighth Day

The Holy Thing: Due discernment in preaching the Gospel.—Matt. vii. 6.

'THAT which is holy' is the body of Jesus Christ; we must not 'give it to dogs':—that is to say, to the impure, to the brazen, to those who are ready to fall out with everybody round them; nor, again, must we give it to those constantly-relapsing sinners whom St Peter has figured by the image of a 'dog returned to his vomit, and a sow to her wallowing in the mire':—as we have already seen in a passage from that Apostle.

Speaking generally, 'that which is holy' means all those sacred mysteries that the preachers of the Gospel are warned to impart with great discernment, and not to have profaned by the unworthy.

'Pearls put before swine' are holy words spoken before men incapable of relishing them, and who, for this very reason, would turn with a

kind of fury on those who press upon them things so little suited to their nature.

Consider well, O Christian, what a state you bring yourself to by sin! God, who had made you in His own image, and had placed your soul —renewed by His grace—amongst the number of His Spouses, now ranks you with 'dogs and swine.' Take pity on your own condition, and try to escape from it:—having recourse to prayer, of which we shall now go on to speak.

Thirty-ninth Day

Of praying with faith; and of '*asking*,' '*seeking*' *and* '*knocking*.'—Matt. vii. 7.

AFTER having shown the sinner the melancholy and shameful state that he has fallen into, Our Saviour shows him the means of coming forth from it by prayer.

'Ask: seek: knock.' These words stand for three degrees of prayer; and—so to speak—for three separate entreaties which we are to make, perseveringly, and one after the other. But what are we to entreat God to give us, that we may get out of this worse than bestial state that sin has plunged us into? Some words of St James will teach us:—'But if any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, Who giveth abundantly, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.'[1]

[1] James i. 5, 6.

Our Lord Himself has told us the same thing. 'Amen, I say to you, if you shall have faith, and stagger not, . . . if you shall say to this mountain: Take up and cast thyself into the sea, it shall be done, and all things whatsoever that you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.'[1]

See, then, what you have been brought to by sin, and ask with faith for *your conversion.* Never say that it is impossible:—though your sins were crushing you with a weight as of a mountain, pray, and the weight will yield to your prayer! Believe firmly that you will obtain what you ask, and it will be given to you. Jesus Christ makes use of these extraordinary comparisons on purpose to show that everything is possible for the man who prays.

Let every Christian, then, take courage, and never despair of his salvation.

[1] Matt. xxi. 21, 22.

Fortieth Day

Perseverance and humility in prayer.—Matt. vii. 7, 8; Luke xi. 5, 6, *seq.*

'KNOCK':—persevere in knocking, even to the extent of making yourself troublesome, if that were possible. There is a way of forcing God, and of wresting graces from His hand; and this way is to go on asking without intermission, but with firm faith; which is made clear by the Gospel assurance: 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' And the same promise is repeated in a varying form:—'For everyone that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.' We must pray, then, by day and night—and when we wake in the night; and though God may seem not to listen, or even to repel us, we must keep on 'knocking':—expecting everything from Him,

and yet acting ourselves. For God will not have us only *ask*, as if He were to do everything quite alone :—we are also to 'seek' with our own energy, and to use our will together with His grace ; for everything depends on this correspondence. But we must never forget that it is always God Who goes first ; for this is the very foundation of humility.

Forty-first Day

'*Pray without ceasing.*'—Luke xviii. 1, 8.

'AND He spoke a parable to them, that we ought always to pray, and not to faint.'

This unceasing prayer does not consist in a perpetual application of mind that could only exhaust one's strength, and which would perhaps after all not attain its end. We 'pray always' when—having offered our prayer at its regular hours—we gather from prayer, and from sacred reading, some truth or some special saying that we keep within our heart, and recall from time to time with no effort:—when we keep ourselves in thought, as far as possible, dependent on God; showing Him all our needs by laying them before Him without words. Then, just as the yawning and dried-up earth seems to beg for rain by the mere fact of exposing its parched surface to heaven, so does the soul pray by exposing its needs to God. And this is what

David means when he says :—'I stretched forth my hands to thee : my soul is as earth without water to thee.' [1] That is : O Lord, I have no need to ask of Thee ; my need asks Thee ; my destitution asks Thee ; my necessities ask Thee !

So long as we keep in this disposition, we 'pray without praying' ; so long as we give our minds to avoiding all that might endanger our soul, we 'pray without praying' ; and God understands this language. 'O Lord, before Whom I stand, and to Whom my misery is known in all its fulness, have pity on it ! And every time Thine eyes shall behold it, O God of all goodness, may it draw down on me Thy mercies !'

Here is one way of 'always praying'—and perhaps the most effectual.

[1] Ps. cxlii. 6.

Forty-second Day

We are to call upon God with repeated and importunate cries—Luke xviii. 4, 5, 7.

THE importunity that we are told to use towards God consists in that urgent form of prayer just described :—never fainting.

Think of that cry of the elect that rises night and day before God ! We must firmly believe that our own unjust deeds—our scandals—all we do that disedifies the Saints and makes them suffer, calls down vengeance upon us by day and by night ; and that we can only appease this cry by a continual cry of repentance. Have mercy, O God, have mercy ! This is what we must cry, night and day :—this is what our needs are incessantly calling out.

Remember the sad state of that judge who said : 'I fear not God, nor regard man.' When all restraint is gone, there is no more hope. So long as there is some check upon us :—so long as, though not fearing God, we are at least slightly restrained by the fear of man :—there is yet hope, and our passions are subject to some kind of moderation.

Forty-third Day

Grounds of hope in prayer.—Matt. vii. 11.

THE certain foundation of this faith, exacted of us by Jesus Christ, that in praying we shall obtain, is the clear understanding that God is *a father*. How much more liberal, He tells us, will our heavenly Father be than an earthly one! 'If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?' If you give away what has been given to you, and what you really hold only as a loan, how much more readily will not God give:—He who is the source of all possessions, and whose very nature, so to speak, is giving?

'You who are evil.' Are we, then, evil even to our own children? This is what the Son of God would have us to understand here; and experience proves only too clearly that it is so, and that we think of ourselves rather than of

them in the very goods that we bestow upon them. God alone, Who is generosity itself and the very essence of goodness, can do nothing but good to those who have recourse to Him.

We should always say in our hearts :—*We may hope for all things from a father.* And we may say again, with Christ : *What is a raven? Yet our heavenly Father feeds it.*

Will He who feeds the servants forget the sons? Could He Who remembers the animals be insensible to the wants of His children? Then, we may ask for everything : and we are bound to hope for everything, since we ask of a Father.

Forty-fourth Day

Asking through Jesus Christ: The qualities of a perfect prayer.—John xvi. 23, 37.

WE must learn to ask through Jesus Christ; and to ask through Christ is to ask for what He commands; to ask for His glory; to introduce the Saviour's name; to place our trust in His goodness and in the infinite merits of His Blood. Whatever we ask through our Saviour ought chiefly to concern our salvation:—anything else should be merely asked as an accessory. When we ask in that Name, to which the Father can refuse nothing, we are sure to obtain what we want, for our Lord has promised it; and to doubt this is to make Jesus Christ a liar. 'Amen, Amen, I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you.'

If, then, we do not get what we ask for, we may take for certain that we have prayed badly,

according to what St James says :—'You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss; that you may consume it on your concupiscences.'[1]

To ask amiss, is to ask without faith, as we learnt before from the same Apostle :—'If any of you want wisdom, let him ask it . . . but in faith, nothing wavering' :—without fear—believing firmly that what you ask will be granted, if you pray well and persevere in prayer.

Our Saviour will not give us anything we ask for which may hinder our salvation. Let us ask for our conversion : if we keep to that request, we shall obtain it.

And let souls who are in the Religious state remember this :—that, for them, the chief fruit of Christ's teaching on prayer should be faithfulness to the hours consecrated to it. Even should they be inwardly distracted—supposing that they lament it, and would gladly not be so—if they remain faithful, humble, and submissive externally :—then the obedience rendered to God, to the Church, and to their Rule, by observing the prescribed genuflections, inclinations, or other outward forms of worship, preserves the real spirit of prayer. They are praying then by means of their state, their disposition,

[1] James iv. 3.

and their will :—and this especially if they humble themselves for their dryness and distractions. Ah, how pleasant is such prayer to God ! How well it mortifies both body and soul ! What graces it calls down, and what sins it expiates !

Forty-fifth Day

Summary of Christian morality: What is its true end?—Matt. vii. 12, 20.

'WHATSOEVER you would that men should do to you, do you also to them.' There can be nothing simpler than this principle:—nothing more far-reaching in practice; for all human society is included in it. Nature itself teaches us the rule. But Christ places it higher than nature by adding: 'For this is the law and the prophets.' It is the summary of their contents—the abridgment of all justice; and the root of the principle lies in the command:—'thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'[1]

'Do violence' to yourself. The work of salvation is not to be undertaken in a spirit of softness. 'Narrow is the gate' of mortification, poverty, and penance. 'Broad is the way' of liberty and licence. There is the large number, and there the small number:—endless matter for

[1] Matt. xxii. 39.

meditation—inexhaustible source of comfort to the humble.

'Even so every good tree yieldeth good fruit, and the bad tree yieldeth bad fruit.' Hence, a good repentance must be distinguished from a bad one.

Strange state of a rational being:—that, failing to bring forth good fruit, he should be fit only to be burnt!

'By their fruits you shall know them'—the good trees—and not by their leaves: that is, by their deeds, not their words. The fig-tree that Our Lord cursed had leaves; but because it bore no fruit Christ made it wither up:—'May no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever.'[1] As a punishment for being barren, it is made yet more so. If we bring not forth fruit in due season, and when the Master looks for it, a time comes when we are unable to produce it at all.

A wise confessor should require fruit, and not merely leaves, from his penitent. He must not be satisfied either with what appears to be a good tree covered with foliage, or with blossoms wherein the fruit is beginning to set. He must obtain true, perfectly-formed fruits, or he will have reason to doubt the sincerity of the repentance.

[1] Matt. xxi. 19, 20.

Forty-sixth Day

What true virtue consists in.—Matt. vii. 21; xxi. 28-32.

JESUS CHRIST has just spoken of trees without fruit; and, of these, one especially bad kind should be noted. This is the Christian who bears the appearance of goodness, whilst in reality he is not good at all. Such a man talks much and does nothing. 'Lord, Lord!' he says; but he had much better not so often name the Lord, and do what He commands.

There are some people who object to nothing: who will undertake whatever you may suggest to them. *Yes, I will do and say what you like; I will pray; I will help in everything:*—but when it comes to putting all this into practice, nothing can be got out of them. The Jews were of those who make many professions; and Jesus said to them:—'The publicans and harlots shall go into the Kingdom of God before you':—by

which He meant that their purely external piety made them entertain a false opinion of their own virtue; whilst those who are openly wicked often become ashamed of themselves, and are converted at last more readily than the outwardly righteous.

Consider those two young men in the Parable. One of them is ashamed to disobey his Father openly by saying 'I will not'; yet after having said 'I go, sir,' he followed his own inclination 'and he went not.' The other said openly 'I will not'; but afterwards, 'being moved with repentance, he went.' One had the presumption to wish to appear virtuous, but was so in words only: hence he fell. The other became horrified at his own boldness, and repented.

We should, therefore, neither pay too much attention to the presumptuous assertions of those who promise everything, nor despair of those who seem to give up everything. Great offences more often lead to repentance than do faults that are hidden under a sham piety, which consists in nothing but words; and whose professors think they have done all when they have praised the Law and the practice of virtue, like the Jews.

Bestir yourself, O Christian Soul! Have

you promised anything? No matter how great a thing it may be, do more than you promised. Have you refused to do something? Be ashamed of your refusal, and do whatever you said you could not or would not undertake.

He who both listens and performs—in whom virtue becomes a habit by force of practice—is 'the wise man who built his house upon a rock.' Temptations may come—disease may enfeeble—every sort of trial may afflict that soul; but it will not succumb. Those, on the contrary, who only listen—who take delight in the beauty or truth of the Sacred Word, without putting it into practice, or doing so but imperfectly—'have built their house upon the sand,' and it will fall upon the first occasion, 'and great' will be 'the fall thereof.'[1]

[1] Matt. vii. 24-27.

Forty-seventh Day

The wonderful effects and invincible strength of Jesus Christ's doctrine.—Matt. vii. 28, 29.

THINK over this teaching of Our Lord's. It is so beautiful and so solid that it calls forth admiration from the whole world. For who could help admiring its purity, grandeur and practicalness? It has converted the world; it has peopled deserts; it has caused thousands of martyrs—of every condition, age and sex—to shed their life-blood. It has made riches and pleasures contemptible, and caused the honours of this world to lose their glory. Men, by its means, have become angels, and have gone so far as to put God Himself before them as their model. Who, then, can fail to admire this lovely and ravishing doctrine?

But admiring is not enough. 'Jesus teaches as having power': everything must give way

before His teaching ; all human pride must bow the head.

May God preserve you from a timid teacher, who dares not tell you plain truths, or who flatters your defects like the Scribes and Pharisees, who thought only of pleasing the people and not of correcting them ! Beg of God to give you a teacher who will speak powerfully and with effect, and not spare your vices :—for on this your conversion depends.

Amen, Amen.

Colston & Coy. Limited, Printers, Edinburgh.

Date Due

Date Loaned

SE 14 '53
JA 21 '55
MR 26 '55
AP 24 '55
MR 18 '58
NO 19 '58
AP 2 5 '5

Demco 292-5

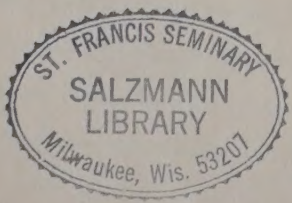
SALZMANN LIBRARY-ST FRANCIS SEMINARY

3 9641 00001 9593

BT 2579 B72 Boussuet, Jacques
The sermon on the mount

DATE DUE	BORROWER'S NAME	ROOM NUMBER

BT 2579 B72 Boussuet, Jacques
The sermon on the mount



JUL 1949